



HOTHAL

THE STORY OF A CELESTIAL DANCER

Vol 781





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HOTHAL



HOTHAL, THE BEAUTIFUL APSARA,* HAD JUST SPENT A BRIEF PERIOD IN BHARAT,† WHERE MORTALS LIVE. SHE WAS NOW RETURNING TO AMARAVATI, THE ABODE OF THE GODS.

HOTHAL JOINED HER FRIENDS IN THEIR LIFE OF AIMLESS MERRIMENT BUT SHE FOUND NO PLEASURE IN IT. SHE LONGED TO GO BACK TO BHARAT.

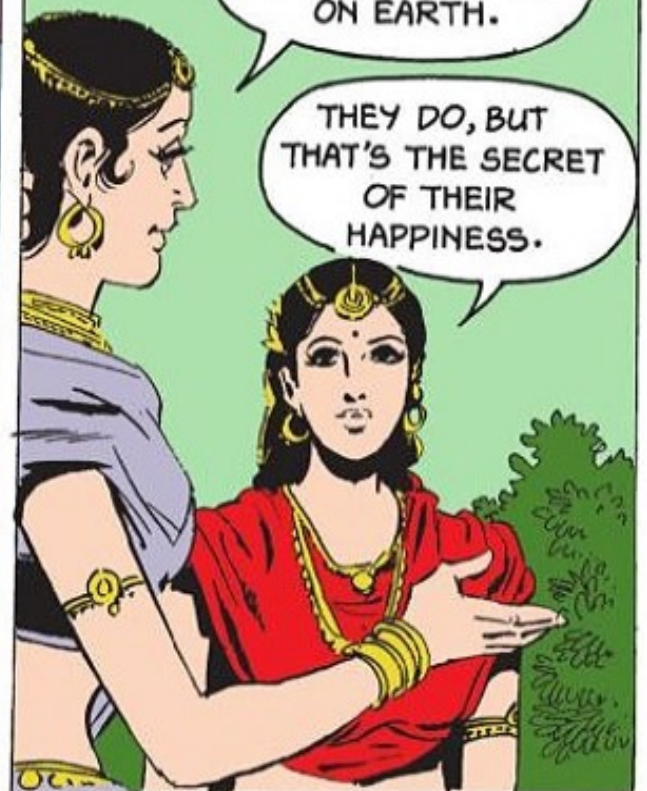
HOTHAL,
WHY ARE YOU
SO SAD?

IT IS SO
WEARING HERE!
PEOPLE ON
EARTH ARE SO
HAPPY.



HOW CAN THAT BE?
THEY HAVE TO TOIL
ON EARTH.

THEY DO, BUT
THAT'S THE SECRET
OF THEIR
HAPPINESS.



THEY WORK HARD THROUGHOUT THE DAY...



...AND IN THE EVENING THEY SING AND DANCE.



IT IS WORK
WHICH MAKES THE LEISURE
THAT FOLLOWS SO
PLEASANT.

OH,
I SEE!

LET'S GET ON
WITH THE DANCE.
COME ON! HURRY!



HOTHAL WATCHED
SILENTLY AS HER
FRIENDS JOINED
THE OTHERS.

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
ME HERE ANY MORE. I WISH
I WERE BACK IN BHARAT.



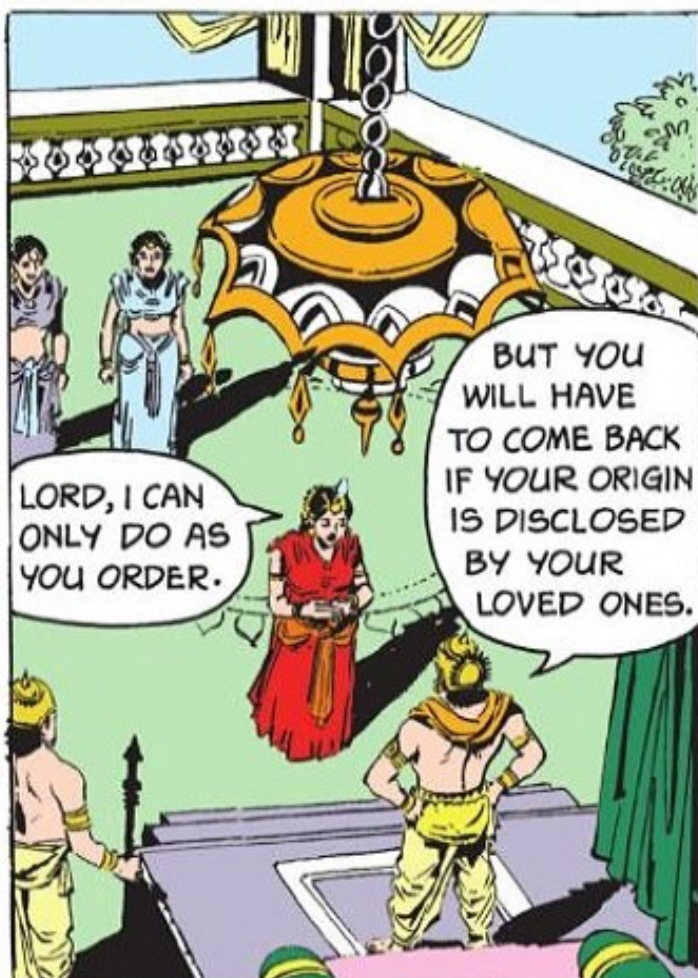
ONE DAY HOTHAL WAS DANCING BEFORE INDRA, THE LORD OF THE DEVAS. SHE RECREATED THE BEAUTIFUL SCENES SHE HAD SEEN IN BHARAT AND THE AUDIENCE WAS IN RAPTURES.



SUDDENLY, SHE STOPPED DANCING AND STOOD QUITE STILL.



COMING OUT OF HER REVERIE, HOTHAL REALISED THAT INDRA WAS ENRAGED.



THE NEXT MOMENT HOTHAL WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A BABY AND FOUND HERSELF CARRIED TO BHARAT.



THE KING OF A SMALL PRINCIPALITY IN WESTERN GUJARAT FOUND THE BABY.

POOR BABY! IT'S QUITE ALONE!



THE KING TOOK THE BABY HOME.

A FEW YEARS PASSED HAPPILY.

SHE GROWS PRETTIER EVERY DAY!



THEN, SUDDENLY, BAMBHANIYA BADSHAH OF SINDH ATTACKED AND RANSACKED THE KINGDOM.

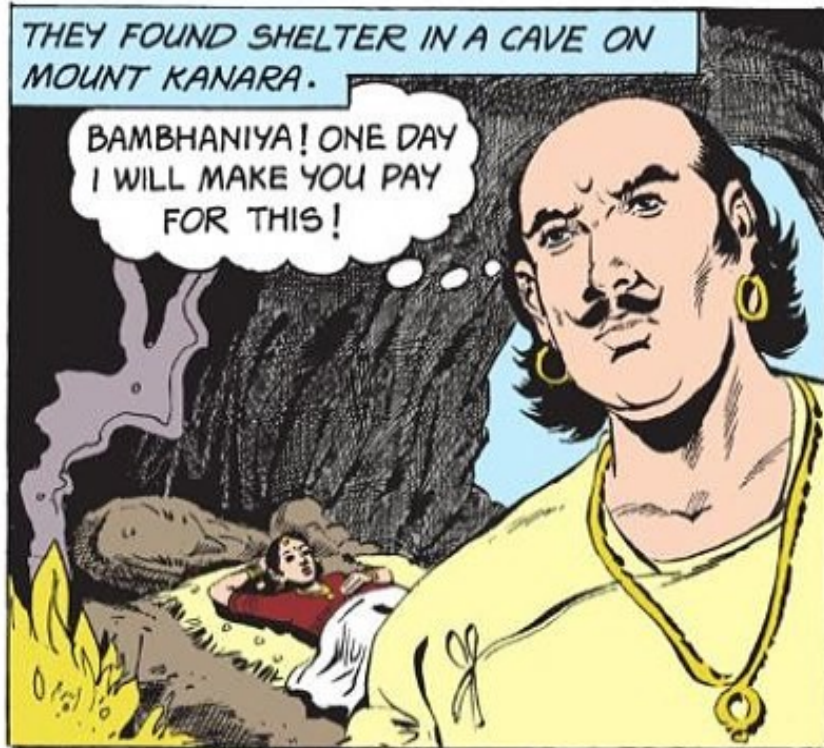


EVERYONE PERISHED; ONLY THE KING AND HOTHAL MANAGED TO ESCAPE.



THEY FOUND SHELTER IN A CAVE ON MOUNT KANARA.

BAMBHANIYA! ONE DAY I WILL MAKE YOU PAY FOR THIS!



THE KING AND HOTHAL LIVED ALONE IN THE JUNGLE. HE TAUGHT HOTHAL SWORD FIGHTING...

YOU'RE GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY!



...AND ARCHERY.



THE YEARS WENT BY AND HOTHAL GREW INTO A YOUNG WOMAN. HER FATHER, WHO WAS NOW GETTING OLD, WAS WORRIED ABOUT HER FUTURE.

HOTHAL, YOU HAVE HELPED ME BEAR MY MISFORTUNES. BUT WHO IN TURN WILL CONSOLE YOU WHEN I DIE?

WE ARE HAPPY TOGETHER NOW, FATHER. LET THE FUTURE TAKE CARE OF ITSELF!



I HAD HOPED TO SEE YOU HAPPILY MARRIED....

AM I A BURDEN TO YOU, FATHER?





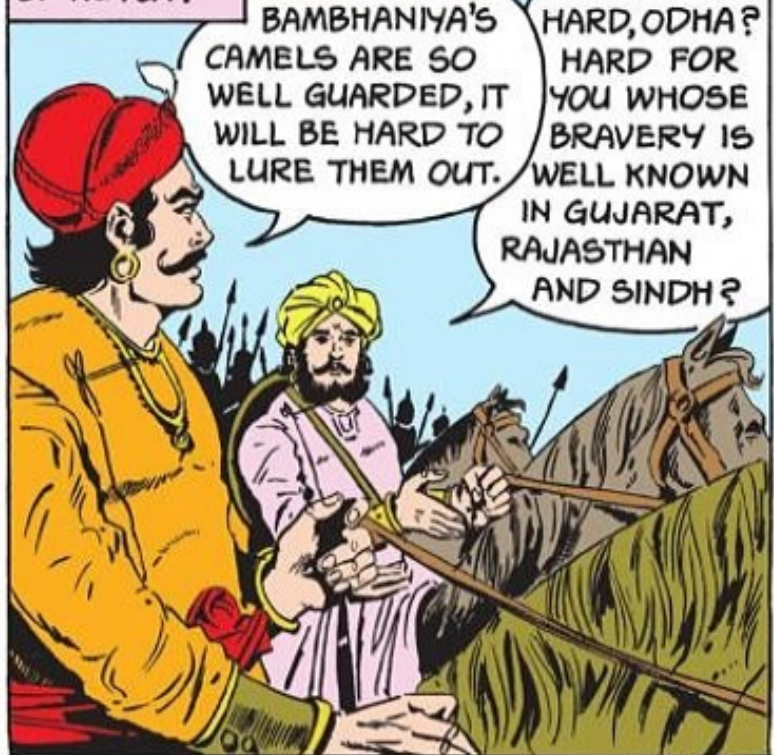
THEIR LIFE CONTINUED IN ITS EVEN PACE BUT THE KING, WHO KNEW HIS END WAS NEAR, GREW DEJECTED.



HOTHAL LOST NO TIME IN CARRYING OUT HER MISSION. DISGUISED AS A YOUNG RAJPUT, SHE JOURNEYED TOWARDS NAGAR SAMOI, A PLACE IN SINDH.



THERE WAS ANOTHER PERSON ALSO HEADING TOWARDS SINDH — ODHAJAM OF KUTCH.*



BAMBHANIYA'S CAMELS ARE SO WELL GUARDED, IT WILL BE HARD TO LURE THEM OUT.

HARD, ODHA? HARD FOR YOU WHOSE BRAVERY IS WELL KNOWN IN GUJARAT, RAJASTHAN AND SINDH?

AT MIDDAY ODHA CAMPED NEAR A LAKE. AFTER A WHILE, HE HEARD HIS MEN TALKING —



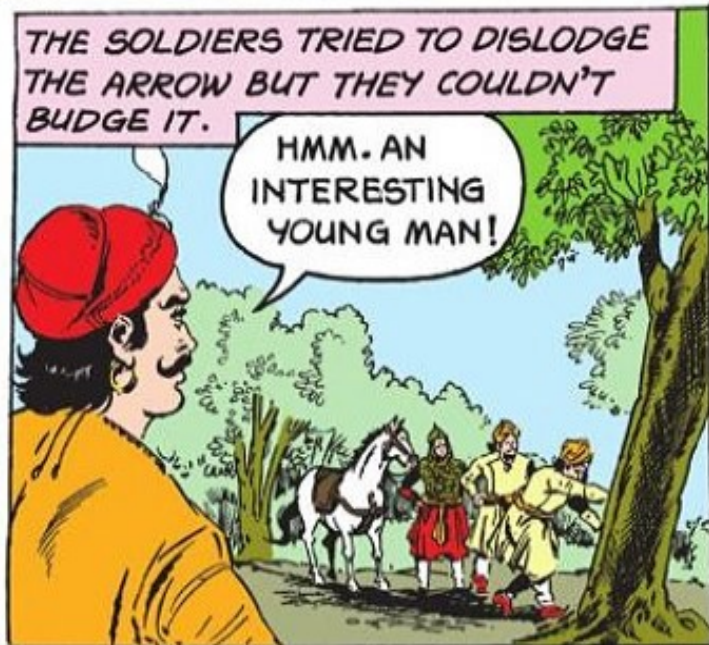
LOOK AT THAT ELEGANT YOUNG MAN.

LET'S ROB HIM OF HIS BELONGINGS.

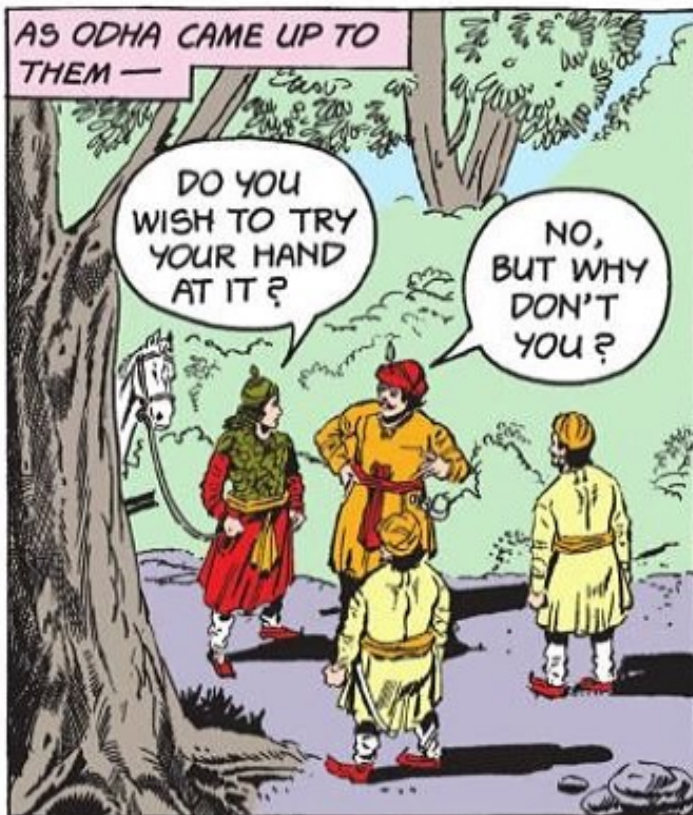
BUT EVEN AS ODHA GOT UP TO INTERVENE —



THERE IS NO NEED TO ROB ME! ALL I HAVE IS YOURS IF...



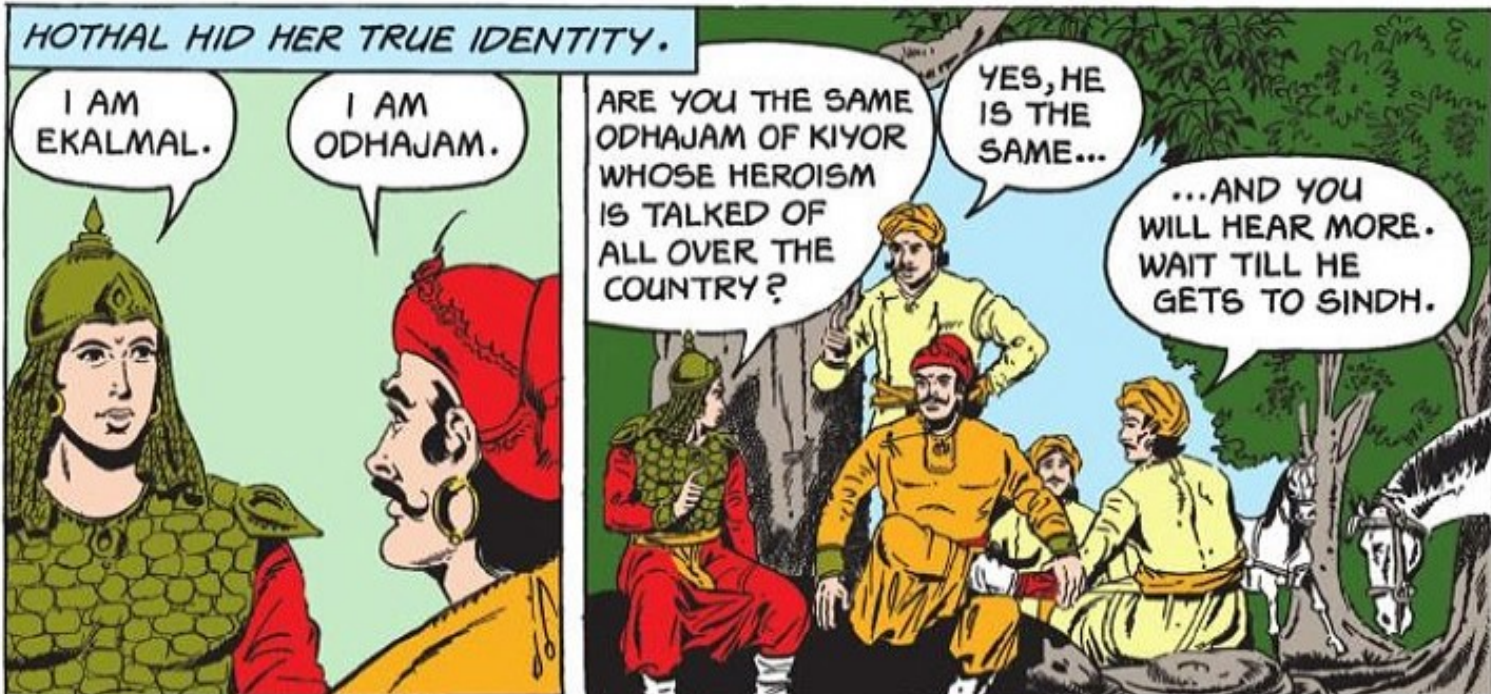
AS ODHA CAME UP TO THEM —

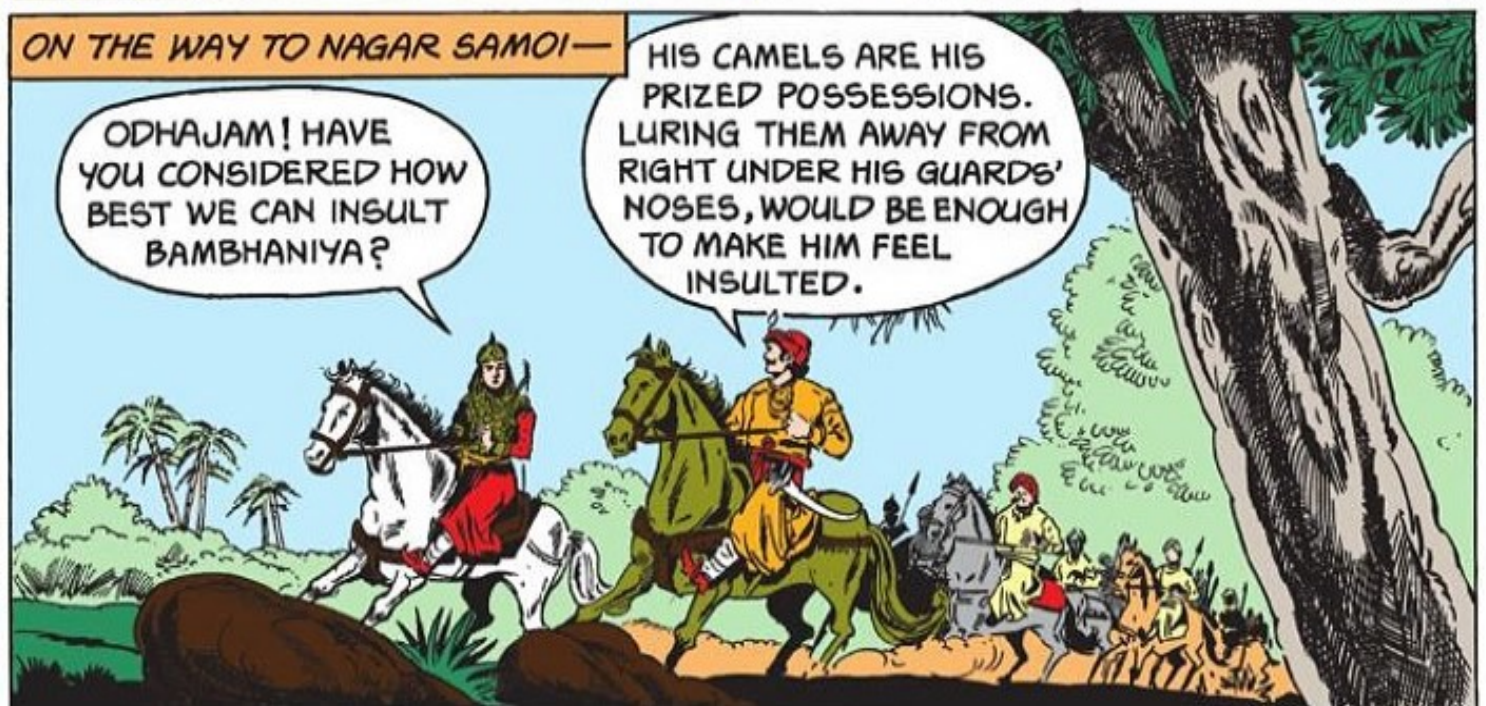
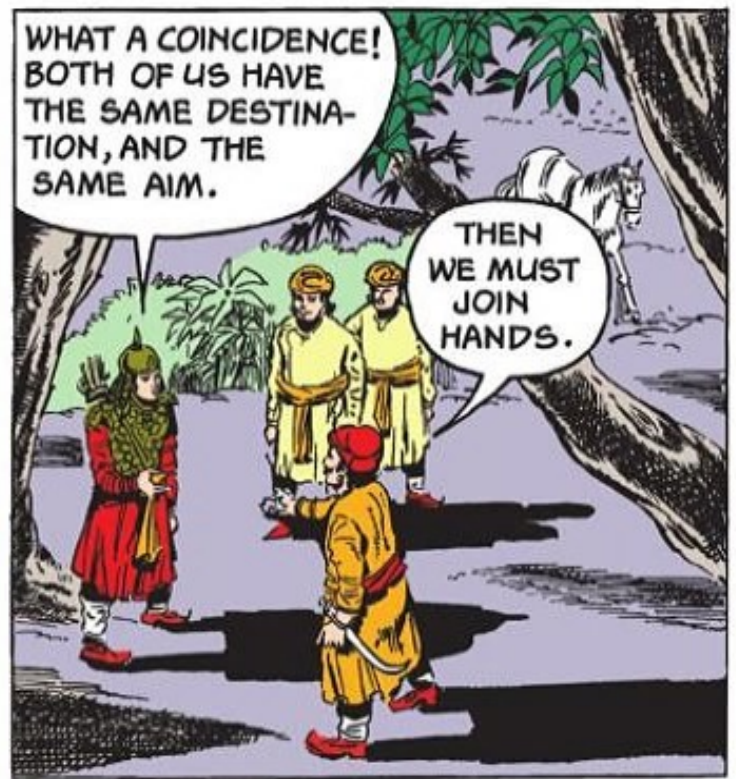


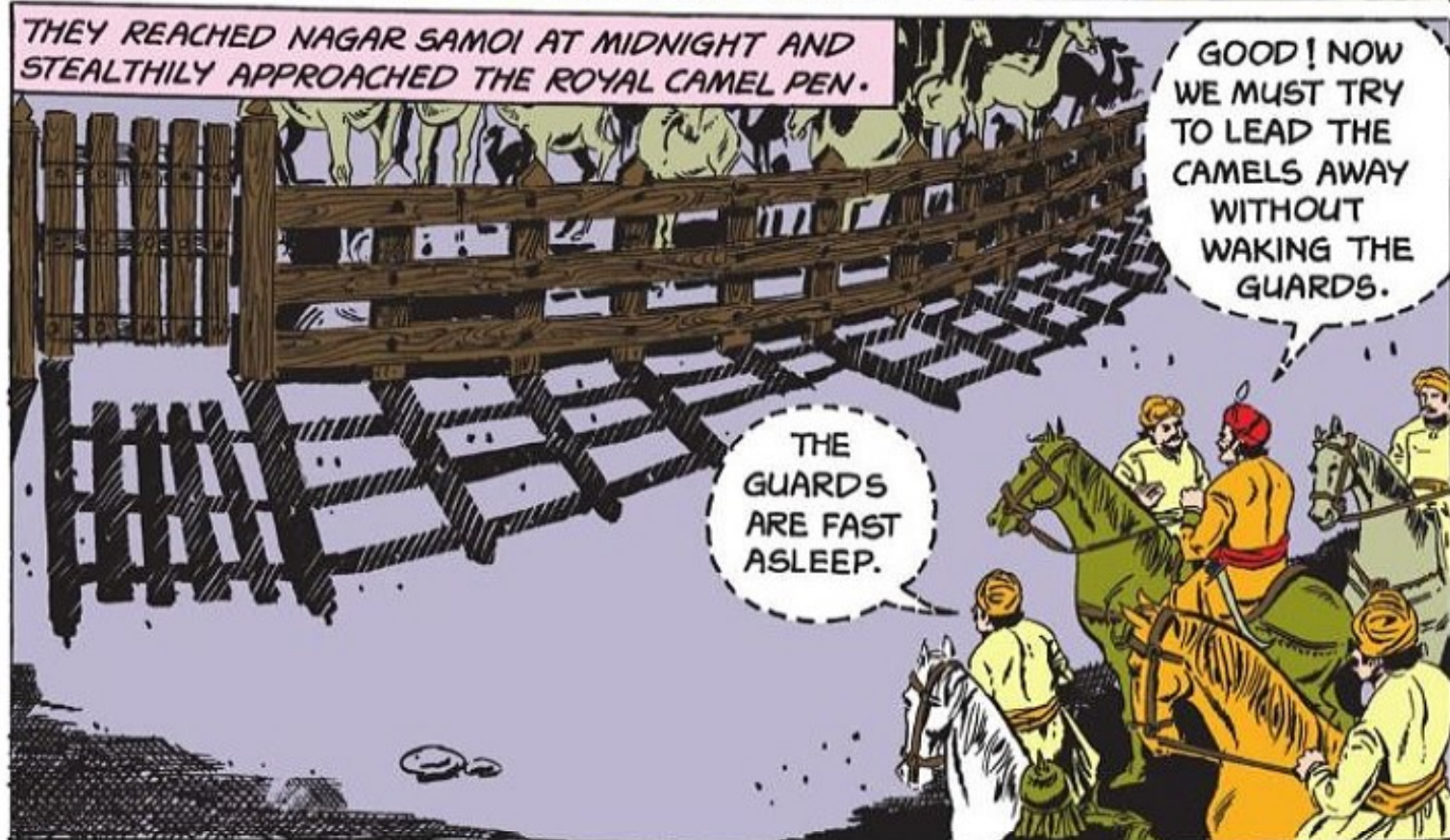
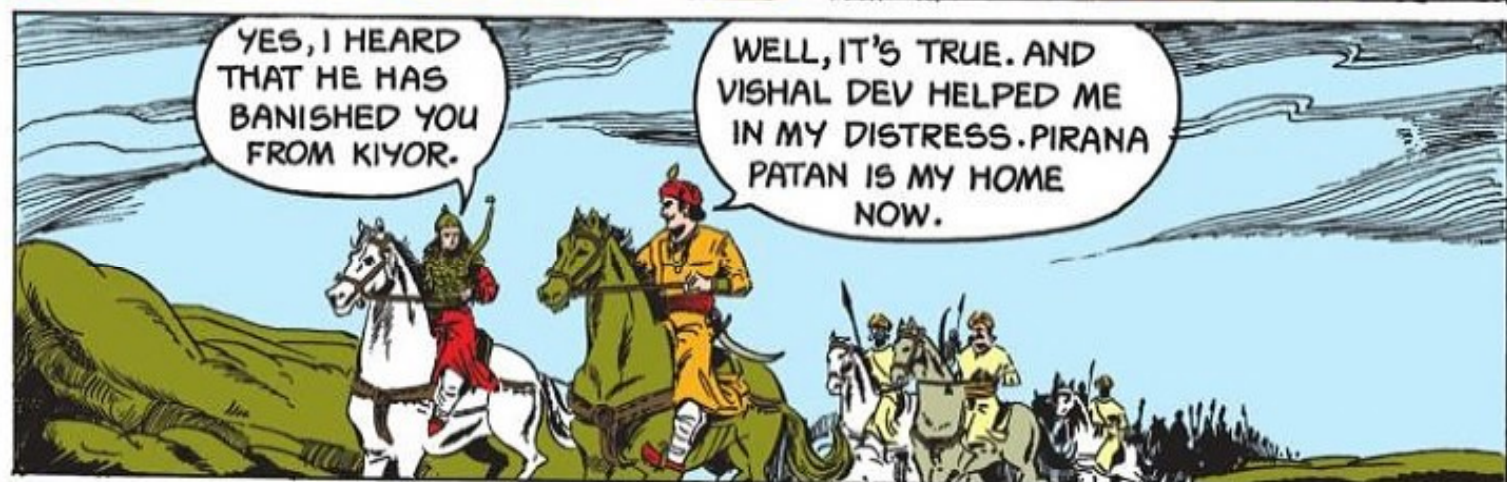
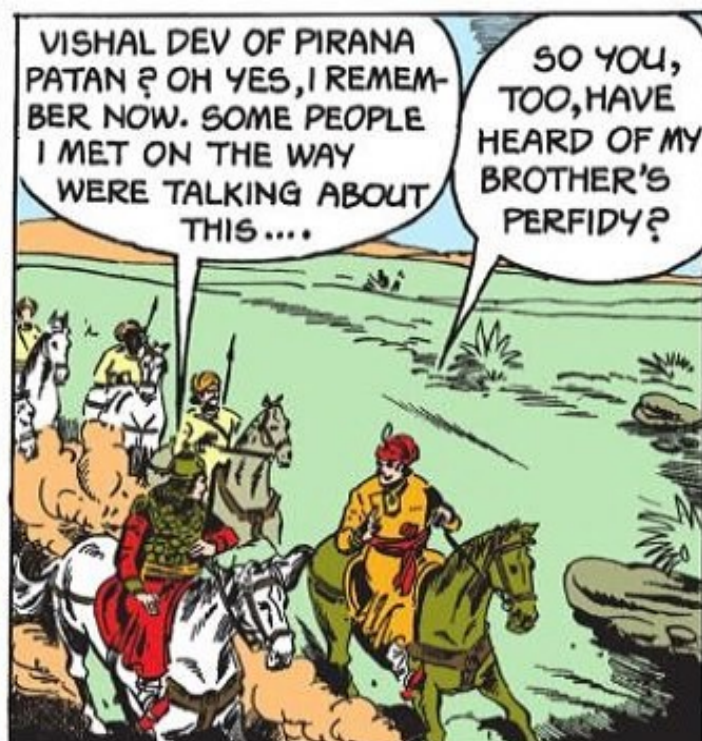
THE YOUNG 'RAJPUT' PULLED OUT THE ARROW WITH EASE.



HOTHAL HID HER TRUE IDENTITY.









WILL YOU, MEN, OPEN THE GATE? I WILL LEAD THE CAMELS OUT.

YOU OPEN THE GATE AND WE WILL TAKE THE CAMELS OUT.

EKAL BENT DOWN AND RAISED THE GATE ON HIS BACK.



AS YOU WISH. I HAD SAID WE SHOULD SHARE THE WORK EQUALLY.

ARE MY MEN COWARDS? OR ARE THEY TESTING HIS STRENGTH?



NOW BRING OUT THE CAMELS.

BRAVO!

THE MEN ENTERED THE PEN AND TRIED TO LEAD THE CAMELS OUT, BUT THEY REFUSED TO OBEY THE STRANGERS.



THEY WON'T MOVE.

HURRY! THE GUARDS HAVE HEARD US!

IN A PANIC, ODHA'S MEN TRIED TO DRIVE THE CAMELS OUT. BUT THEY WOULDN'T BUDGE.



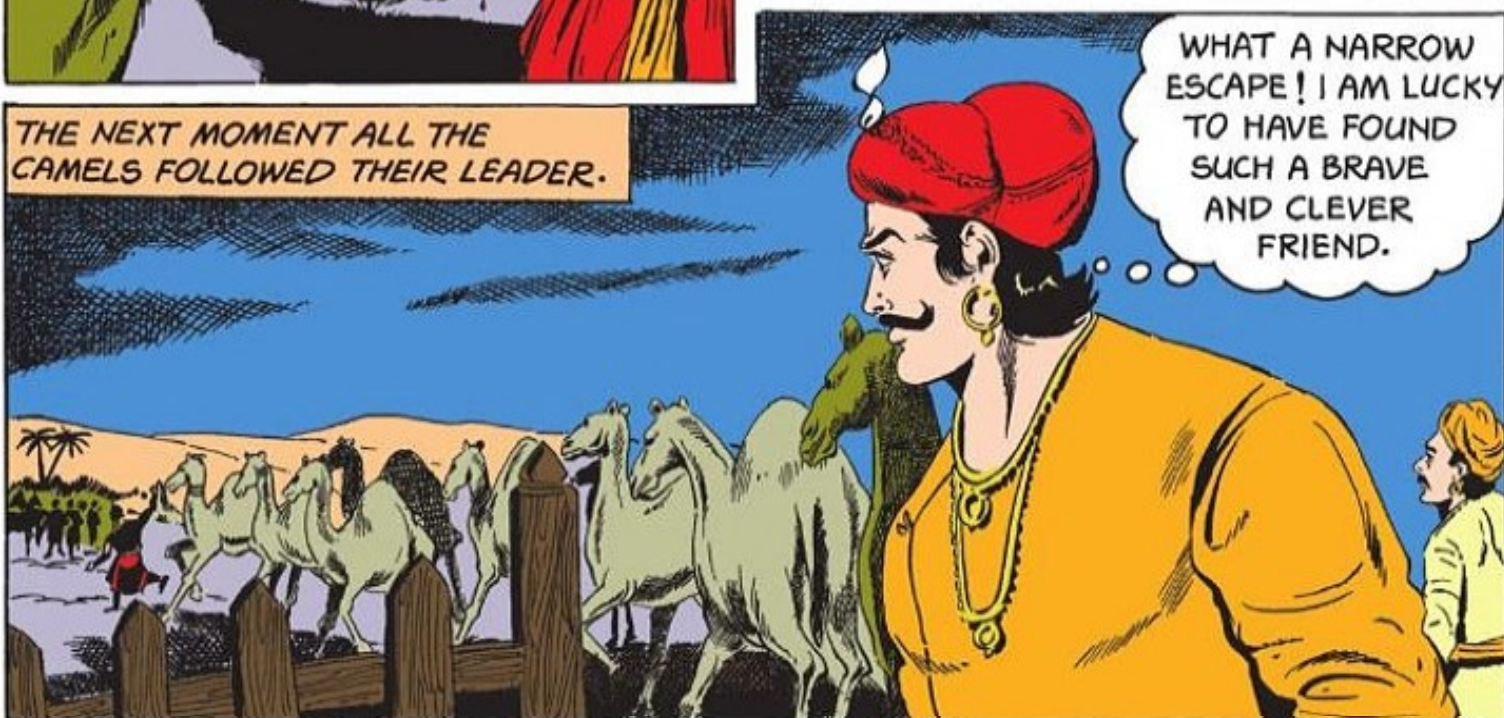
EKAL LIGHTLY PRICKED THE BACK OF A CAMEL WITH AN ARROW TO GET A FEW DROPS OF BLOOD, WHICH HE MOPPED UP WITH A CLOTH. HE THEN WRAPPED THE CLOTH ROUND A SPEAR AND HELD IT UP TO THE NOSE OF THE CAMEL.



SMELLING ITS OWN BLOOD, THE CAMEL FOLLOWED EKALMAL.



THE NEXT MOMENT ALL THE CAMELS FOLLOWED THEIR LEADER.



THE MEN LED THE CAMELS AWAY. EKAL AND ODHAJAM TURNED TO DEAL WITH THE GUARDS...



...WHOM THEY SOON VANQUISHED.

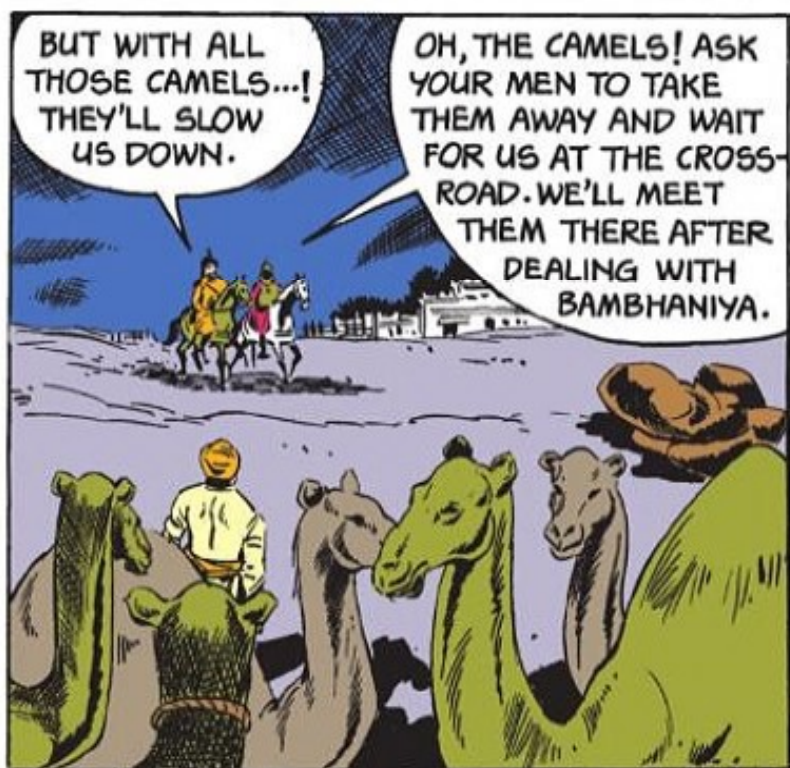
BAMBHANIYA WILL CERTAINLY PURSUE US NOW!

THAT'S JUST WHAT WE WANT!



BUT WITH ALL THOSE CAMELS...! THEY'LL SLOW US DOWN.

OH, THE CAMELS! ASK YOUR MEN TO TAKE THEM AWAY AND WAIT FOR US AT THE CROSS-ROAD. WE'LL MEET THEM THERE AFTER DEALING WITH BAMBHANIYA.



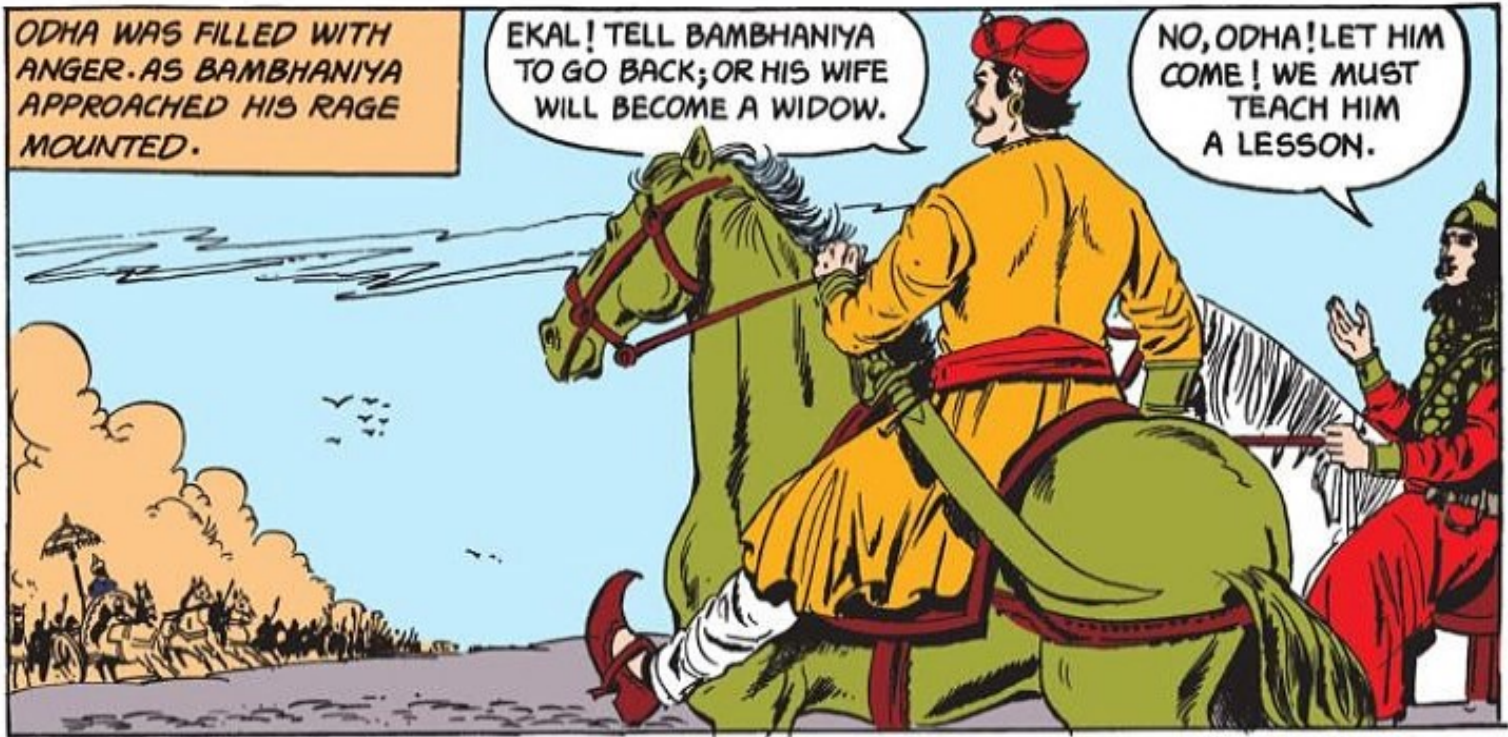
AS ODHA'S MEN DEPARTED, THE TWO FRIENDS WAITED FOR THE ENEMY.



ODHA WAS FILLED WITH ANGER. AS BAMBHANIYA APPROACHED HIS RAGE MOUNTED.

EKAL! TELL BAMBHANIYA TO GO BACK; OR HIS WIFE WILL BECOME A WIDOW.

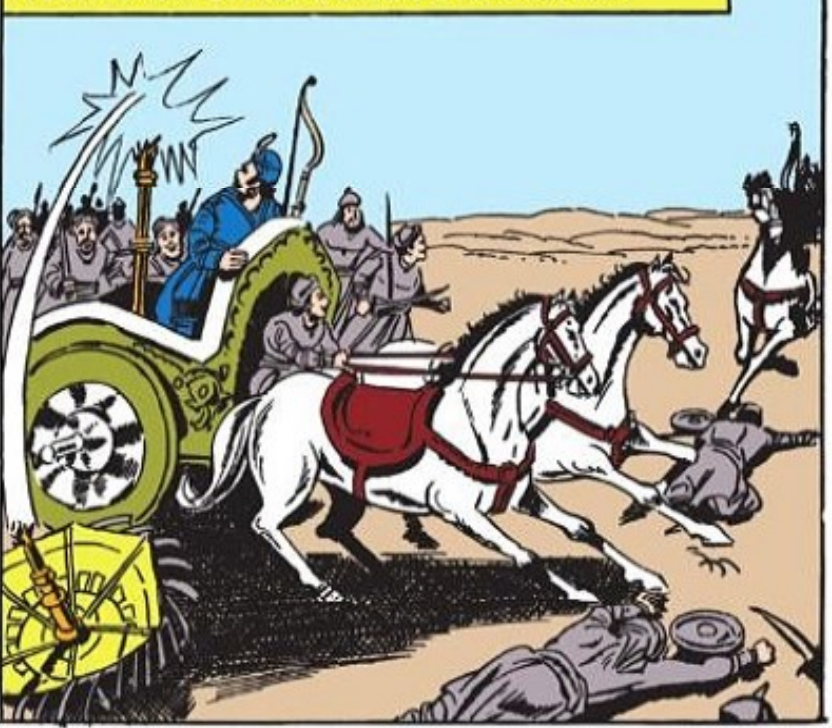
NO, ODHA! LET HIM COME! WE MUST TEACH HIM A LESSON.



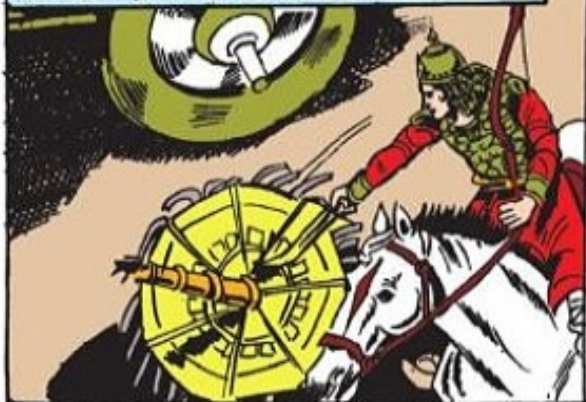
EKAL MOVED LIKE A WHIRLWIND AND KILLED EVERY SOLDIER WHO STOOD IN HIS WAY.



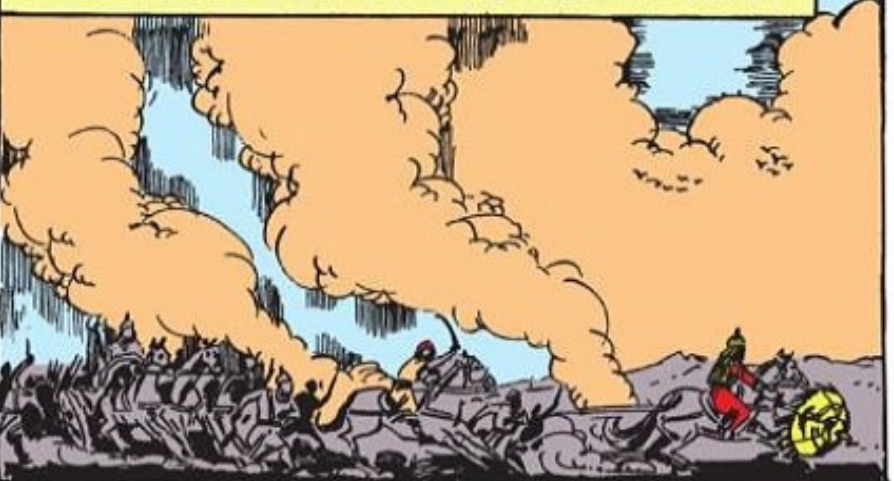
HE EVEN MANAGED TO SHOOT DOWN THE CANOPY OF BAMBHANIYA'S CHARIOT.

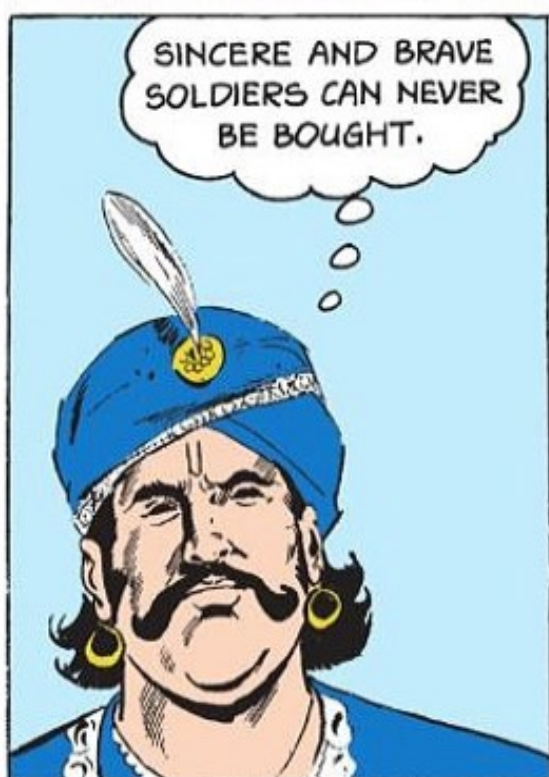


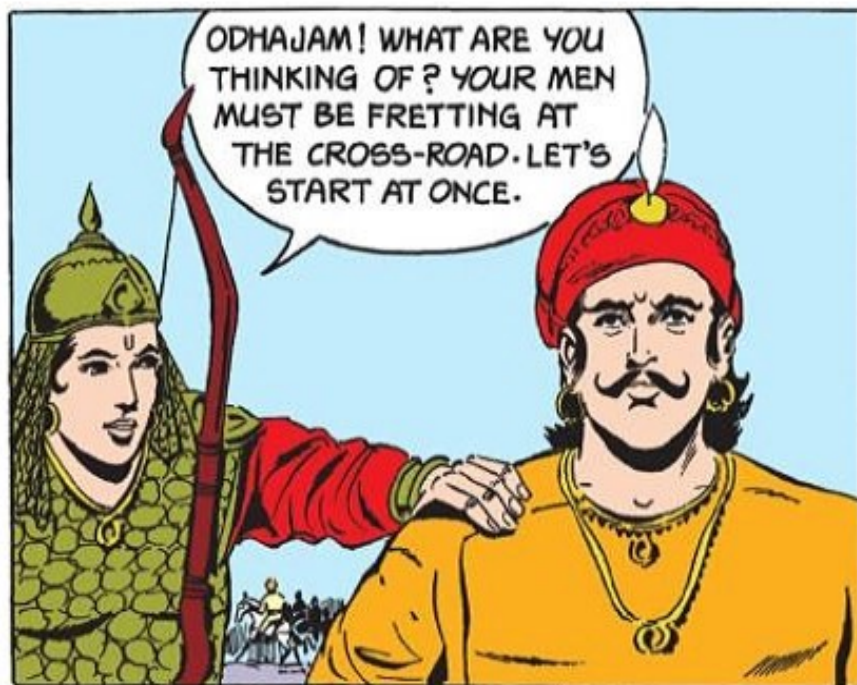
BEFORE BAMBHANIYA'S SOLDIERS COULD PICK UP THE FALLEN CANOPY, EKAL SNATCHED IT UP...



...AND RODE SAFELY BACK TO HIS OWN SIDE.







ODHAJAM! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF? YOUR MEN MUST BE FRETTING AT THE CROSS-ROAD. LET'S START AT ONCE.

THEY REACHED THE SPOT WHERE ODHA'S SOLDIERS WERE WAITING.



WE HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE TASK OF SHARING THE CAMELS.

ODHA NOTICED THAT THE CAMELS ON ONE SIDE WERE ROBUST WHILE THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE LOOKED RATHER WEAK.

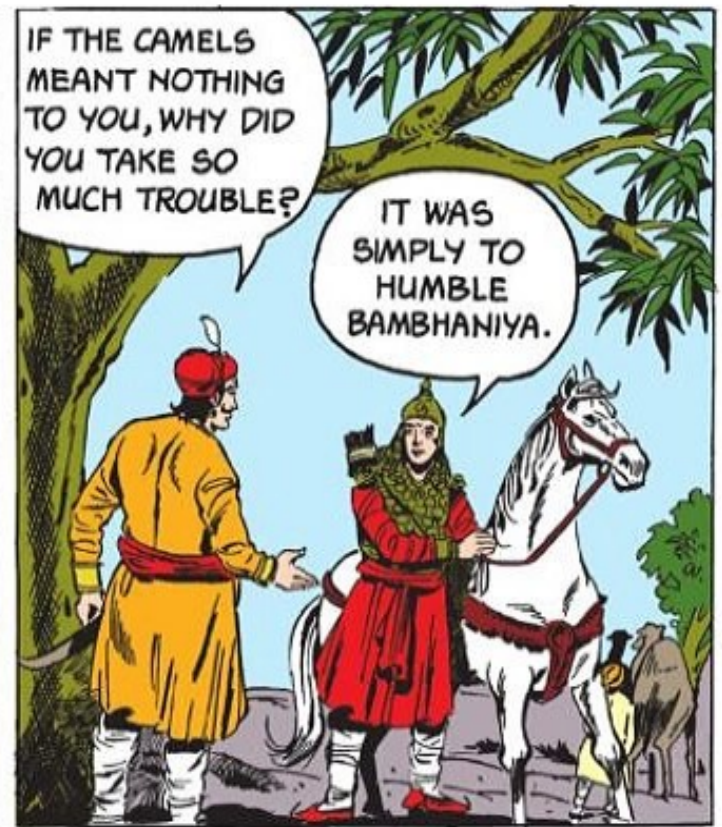


THOSE CAMELS ARE YOURS, EKALMAL.

IT'S NOT FAIR TO OFFER EKAL THE WORST CAMELS.

MOUNTING HIS HORSE, ODHA RODE THROUGH THE CENTRE OF EACH GROUP OF CAMELS, THUS DIVIDING THEM INTO TWO FURTHER EQUAL SHARES.

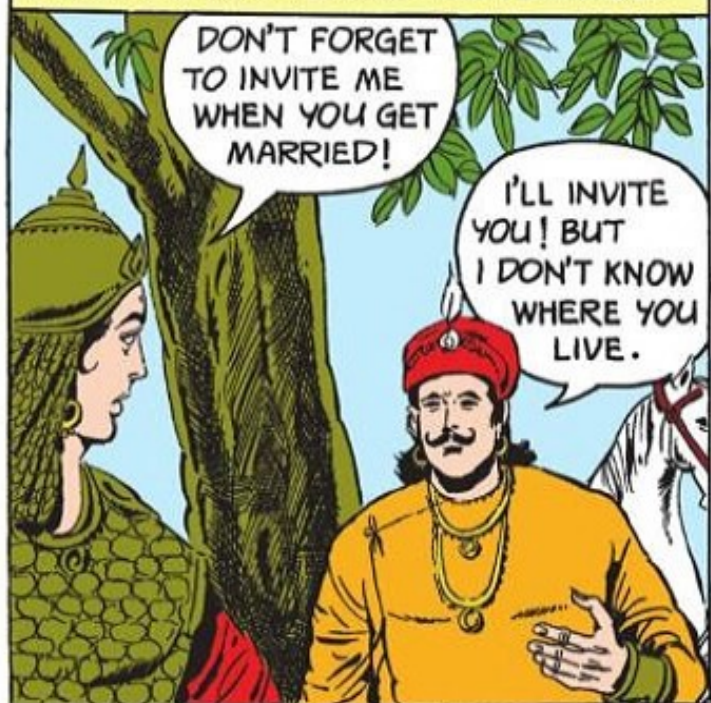




THEN EKAL CONTROLLED HIS FEELINGS.

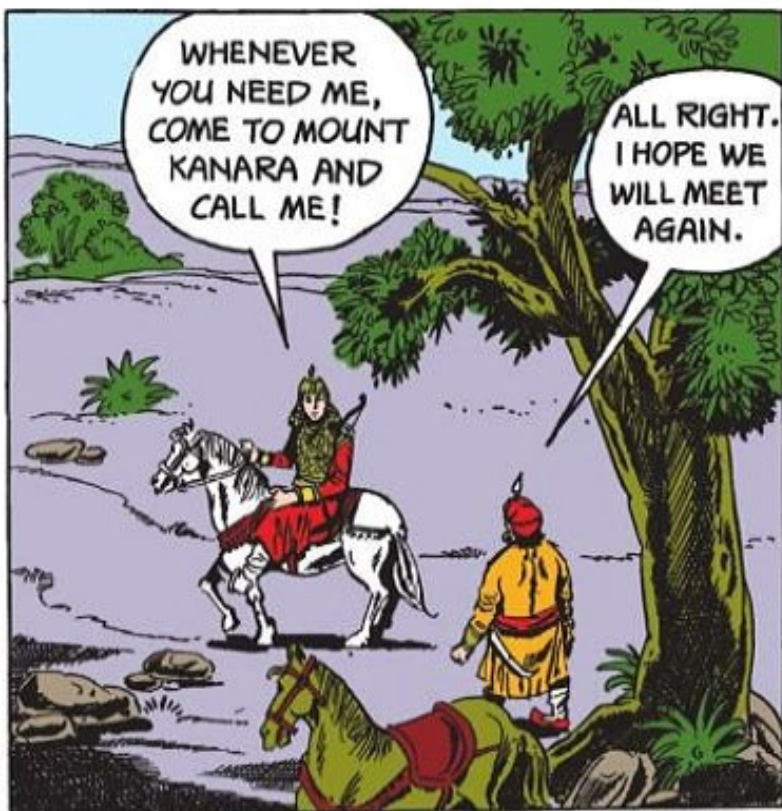
DON'T FORGET
TO INVITE ME
WHEN YOU GET
MARRIED!

I'LL INVITE
YOU! BUT
I DON'T KNOW
WHERE YOU
LIVE.



WHENEVER
YOU NEED ME,
COME TO MOUNT
KANARA AND
CALL ME!

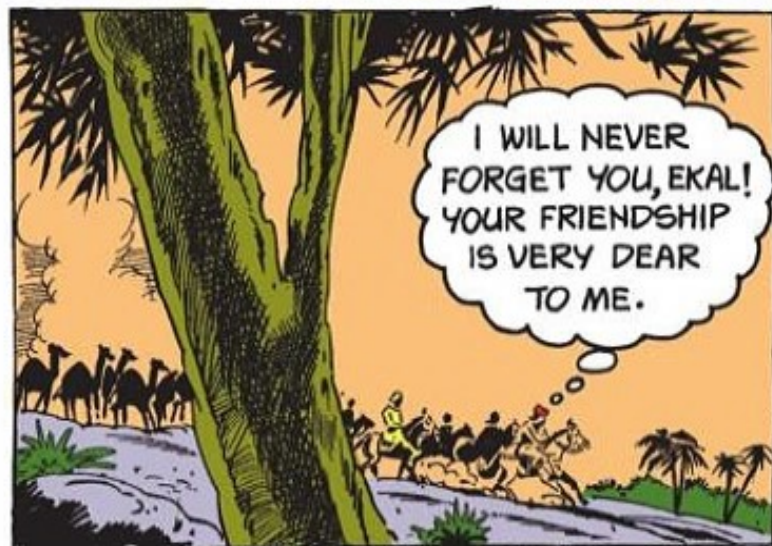
ALL RIGHT.
I HOPE WE
WILL MEET
AGAIN.



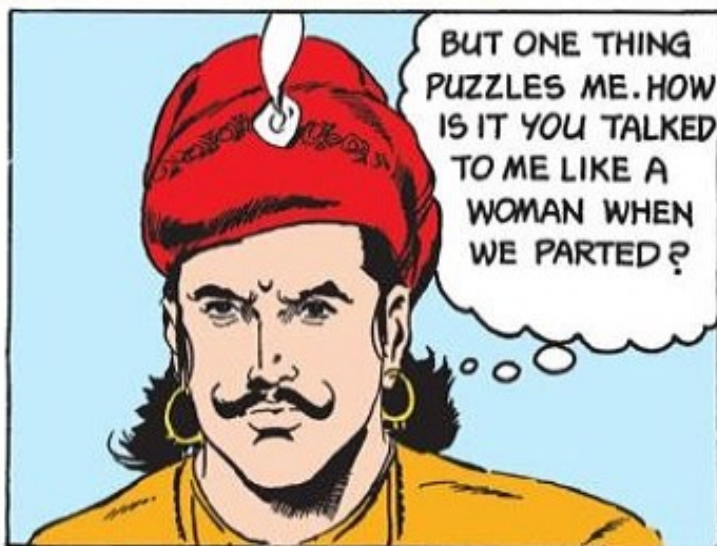
I FEEL I HAVE
LOST SOMETHING
VERY PRECIOUS.

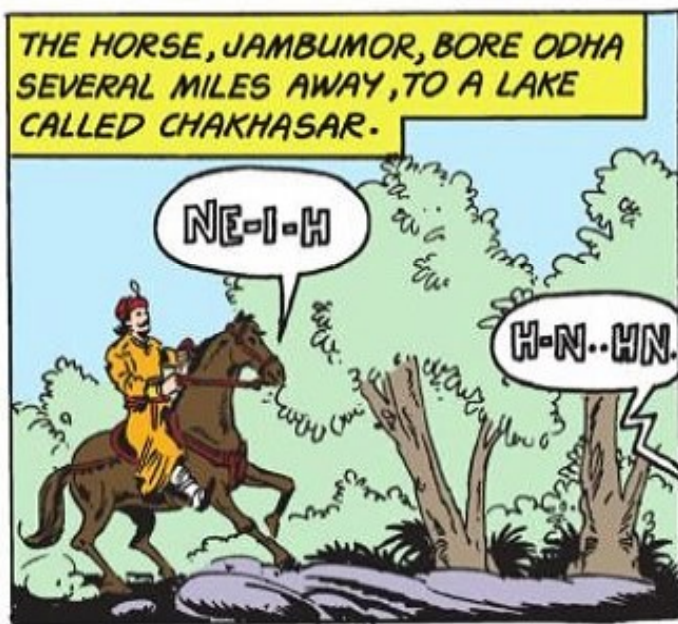
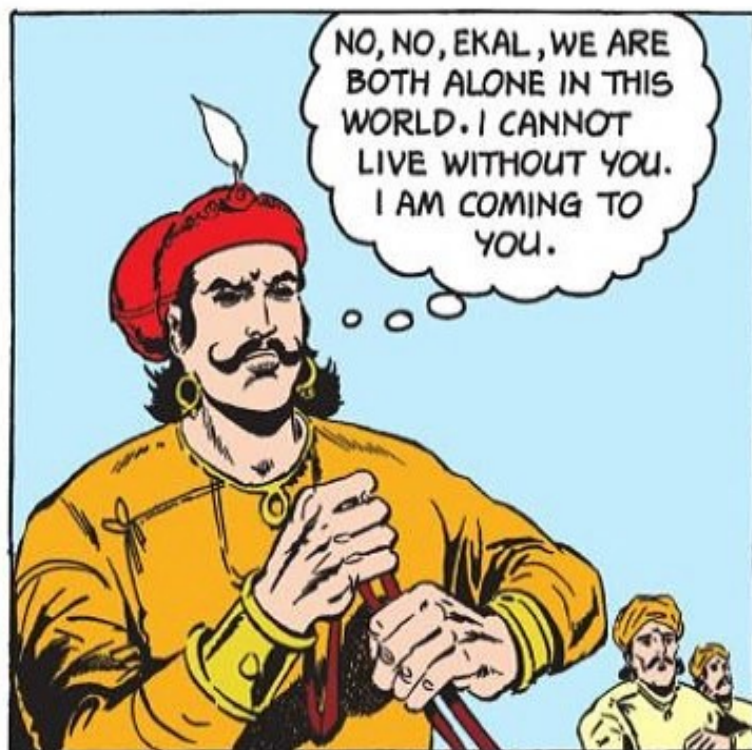


I WILL NEVER
FORGET YOU, EKAL!
YOUR FRIENDSHIP
IS VERY DEAR
TO ME.



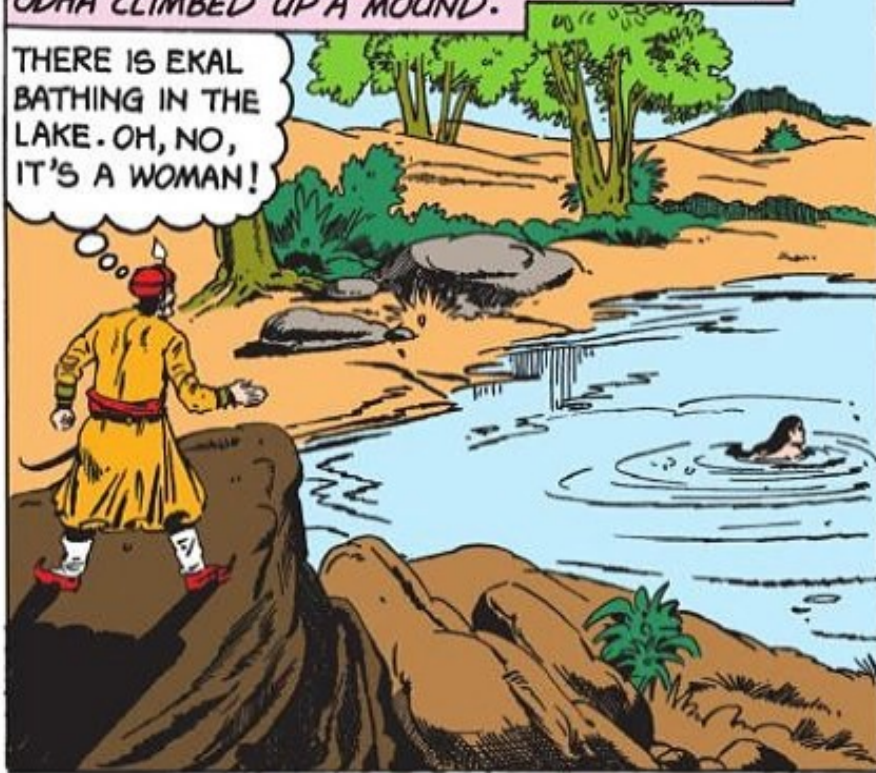
BUT ONE THING
PUZZLES ME. HOW
IS IT YOU TALKED
TO ME LIKE A
WOMAN WHEN
WE PARTED?





WANDERING AROUND IN SEARCH OF EKALMAL,
ODHA CLIMBED UP A MOUND.

THERE IS EKAL
BATHING IN THE
LAKE. OH, NO,
IT'S A WOMAN!



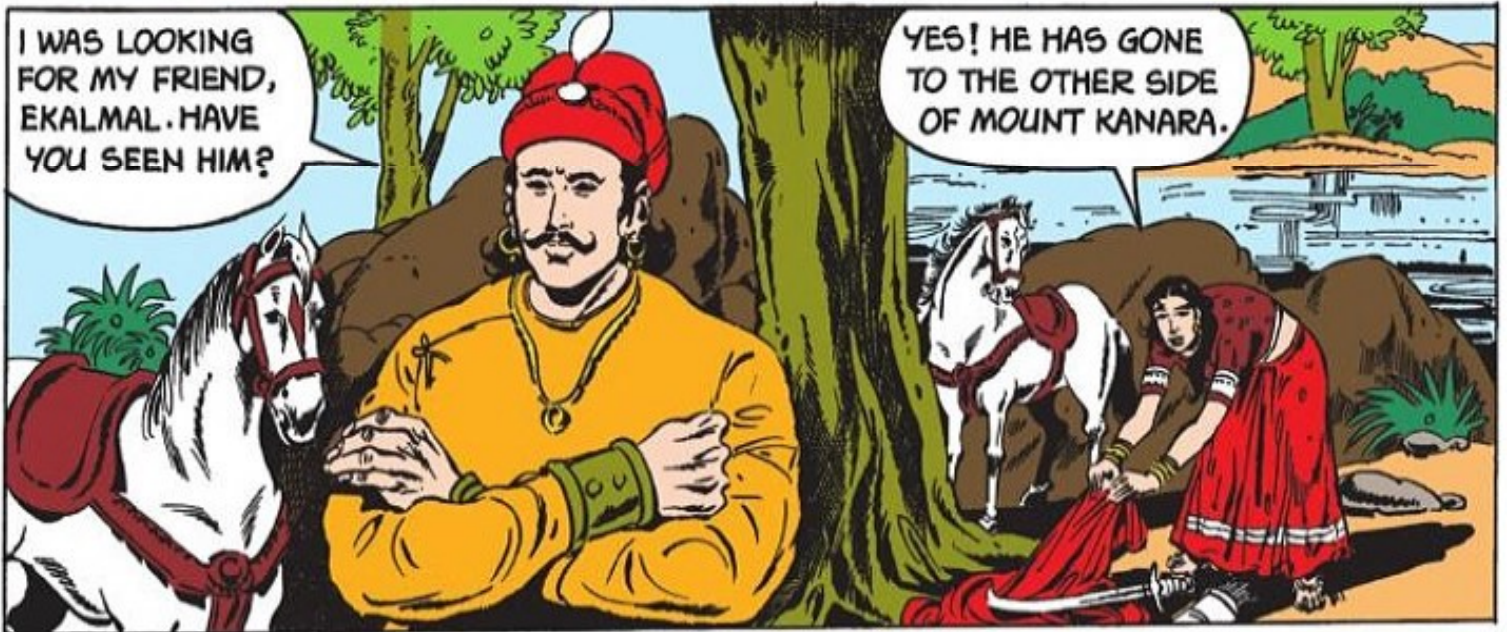
DON'T STARE
SO HARD. PLEASE
GO AWAY AND
LET ME COME
OUT AND
DRESS.

OH! I AM
SORRY.



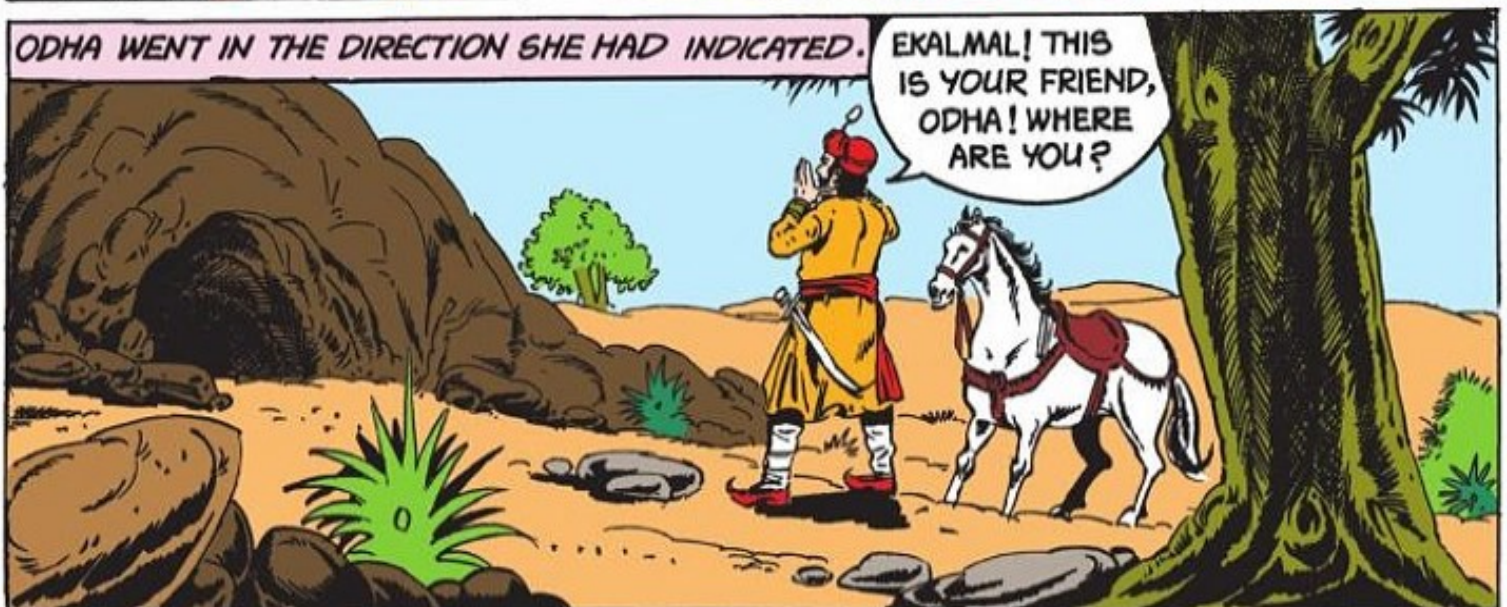
I WAS LOOKING
FOR MY FRIEND,
EKALMAL. HAVE
YOU SEEN HIM?

YES! HE HAS GONE
TO THE OTHER SIDE
OF MOUNT KANARA.



ODHA WENT IN THE DIRECTION SHE HAD INDICATED.

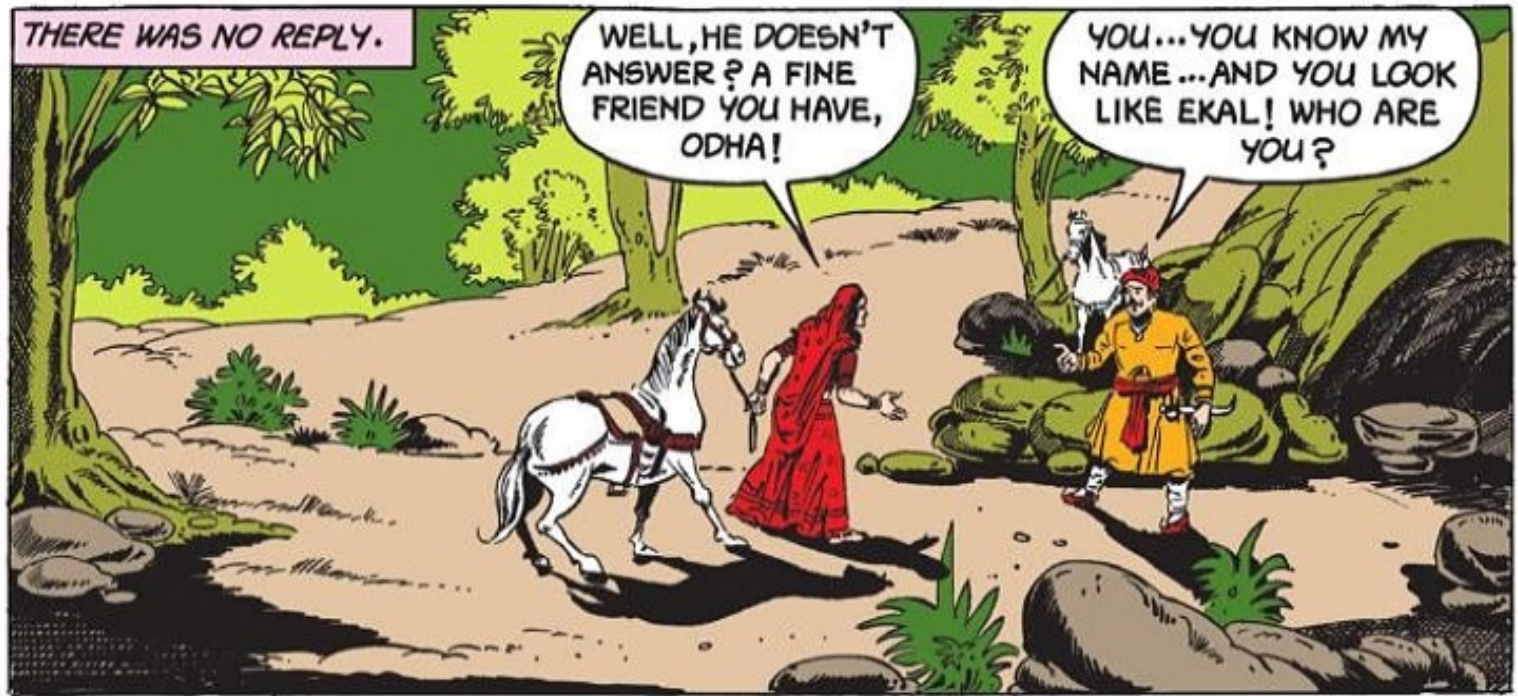
EKALMAL! THIS
IS YOUR FRIEND,
ODHA! WHERE
ARE YOU?



THERE WAS NO REPLY.

WELL, HE DOESN'T ANSWER? A FINE FRIEND YOU HAVE, ODHA!

YOU...YOU KNOW MY NAME...AND YOU LOOK LIKE EKAL! WHO ARE YOU?



LOOK CLOSELY AT MY FACE. DON'T YOU KNOW ME?

YOU ARE EKAL!



I WAS CERTAIN YOU WOULD COME TO LOOK FOR YOUR LONELY FRIEND!

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW....



LET ME EXPLAIN. MY NAME IS HOTHAL....



AND SHE TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY, BEGINNING WITH HER BANISHMENT BY INDRA.

YOUR HISTORY MAKES YOU EVEN MORE IRRESISTIBLE, HOTHAL. I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

I WILL, ODHA, IF YOU WILL PROMISE ME ONE THING!



YOU MUST NOT DISCLOSE THE SECRET OF MY ORIGIN TO ANYONE. IF YOU DO, I WILL HAVE TO RETURN TO AMARAVATI AND YOU WILL LOSE ME. WILL YOU GIVE ME YOUR WORD?

YES, HOTHAL, I PROMISE.



ODHA MARRIED HOTHAL.



THEY WERE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER. WITH THEIR TWO SONS, JAKHARA AND JESSAL, WHO WERE LATER BORN TO THEM, THEY LIVED A PEACEFUL LIFE IN THE FORESTS.



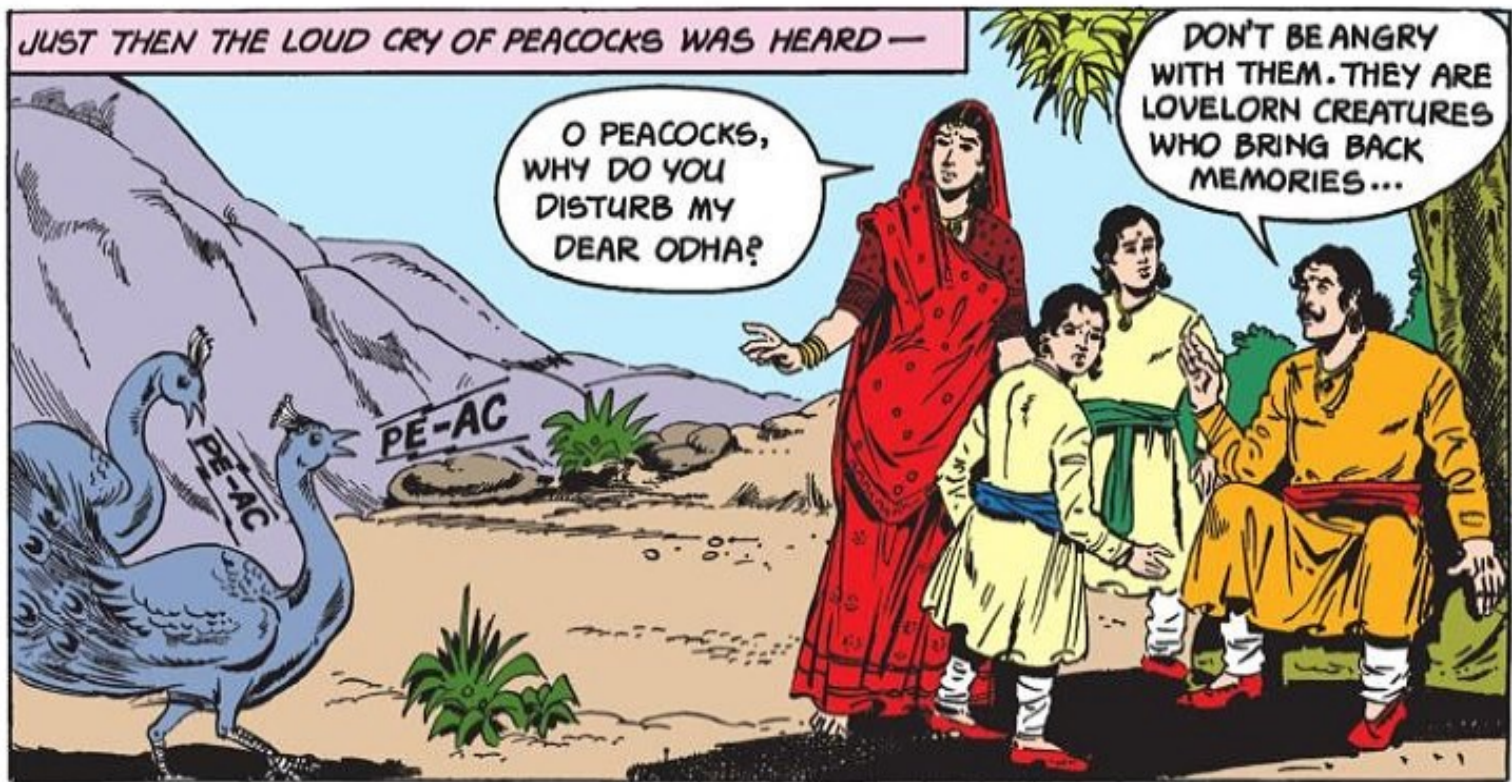
MANY YEARS PASSED. ONE DAY —

WHAT'S THE MATTER, ODHAMAM? WHY DO YOU LOOK SO SAD!

HE HAS BEEN SITTING LIKE THIS FOR HOURS, MOTHER.



JUST THEN THE LOUD CRY OF PEACOCKS WAS HEARD —



O PEACOCKS,
WHY DO YOU
DISTURB MY
DEAR ODHA?

DON'T BE ANGRY
WITH THEM. THEY ARE
LOVELORN CREATURES
WHO BRING BACK
MEMORIES...

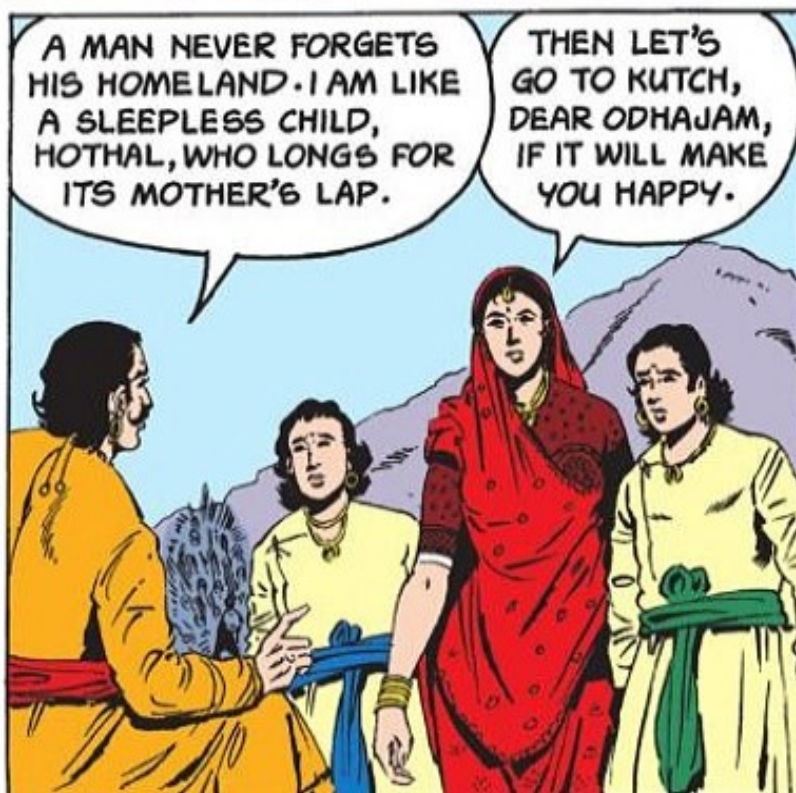
...AND, HOTHAL, THEY
REMINDE ME OF MY CHILDHOOD.
I MISS MY HOMETLAND. I WANT
TO VISIT KUTCH AGAIN!

WHY, ODHAJAM?
AREN'T YOU HAPPY
WITH US?



A MAN NEVER FORGETS
HIS HOMETLAND. I AM LIKE
A SLEEPLESS CHILD,
HOTHAL, WHO LONGS FOR
ITS MOTHER'S LAP.

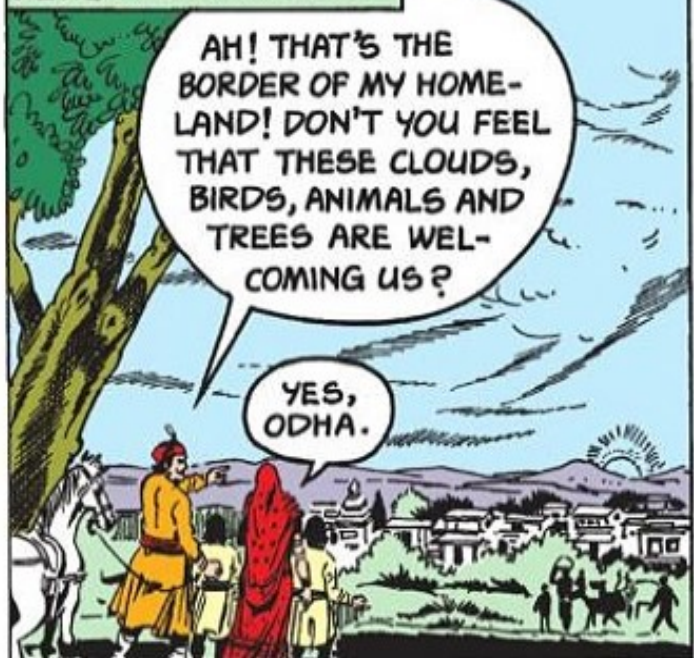
THEN LET'S
GO TO KUTCH,
DEAR ODHAJAM,
IF IT WILL MAKE
YOU HAPPY.

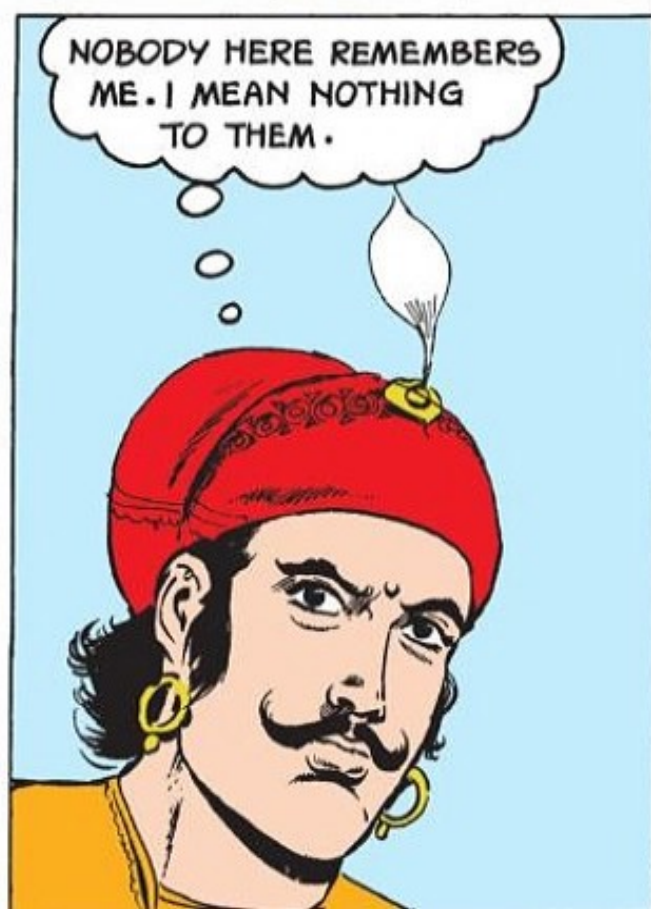
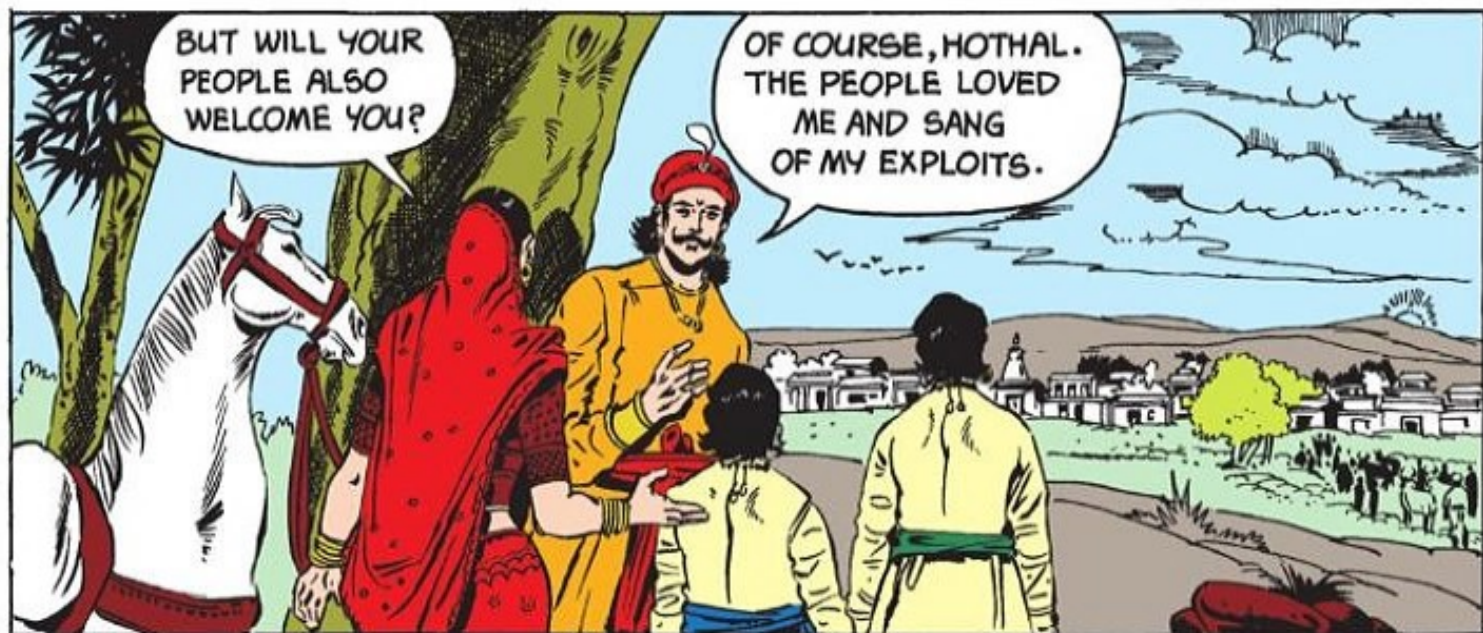


THEY STARTED ON THE JOURNEY AT
ONCE. AS THEY NEARED KUTCH, ODHA'S
DELIGHT INCREASED.

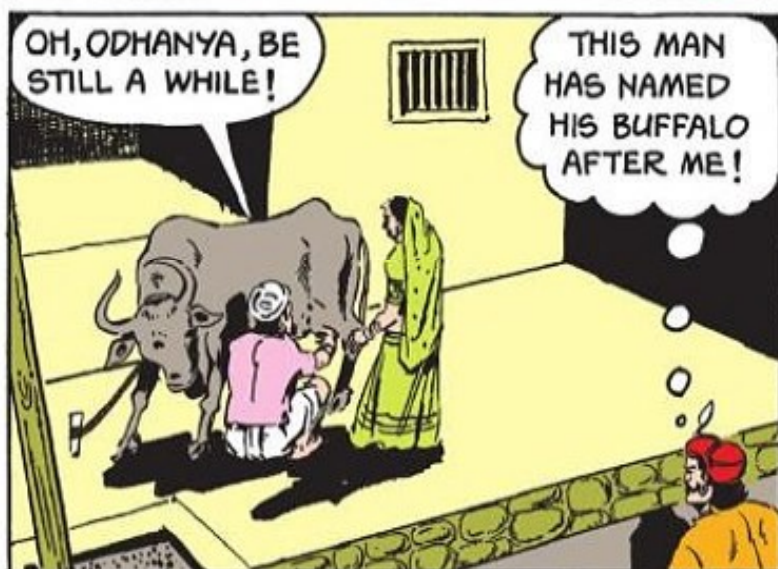
AH! THAT'S THE
BORDER OF MY HOME-
LAND! DON'T YOU FEEL
THAT THESE CLOUDS,
BIRDS, ANIMALS AND
TREES ARE WEL-
COMING US?

YES,
ODHA.





SUDDENLY —





ODHA RETURNED IMMEDIATELY TO HUTHAL AND HIS SONS, AND TOLD THEM ABOUT HIS BROTHER.

IT WASN'T A GOOD IDEA TO COME HERE.



WHERE SHALL WE GO NOW?

TO PIRANA PATAN, TO MY COUSIN, VISHAL DEV.

OH, AT LAST WE ARE TO MEET HIM! WE HAVE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT HIM FROM YOU, FATHER!



IN PIRANA PATAN, VISHAL DEV RECEIVED ODHA WITH AFFECTION.

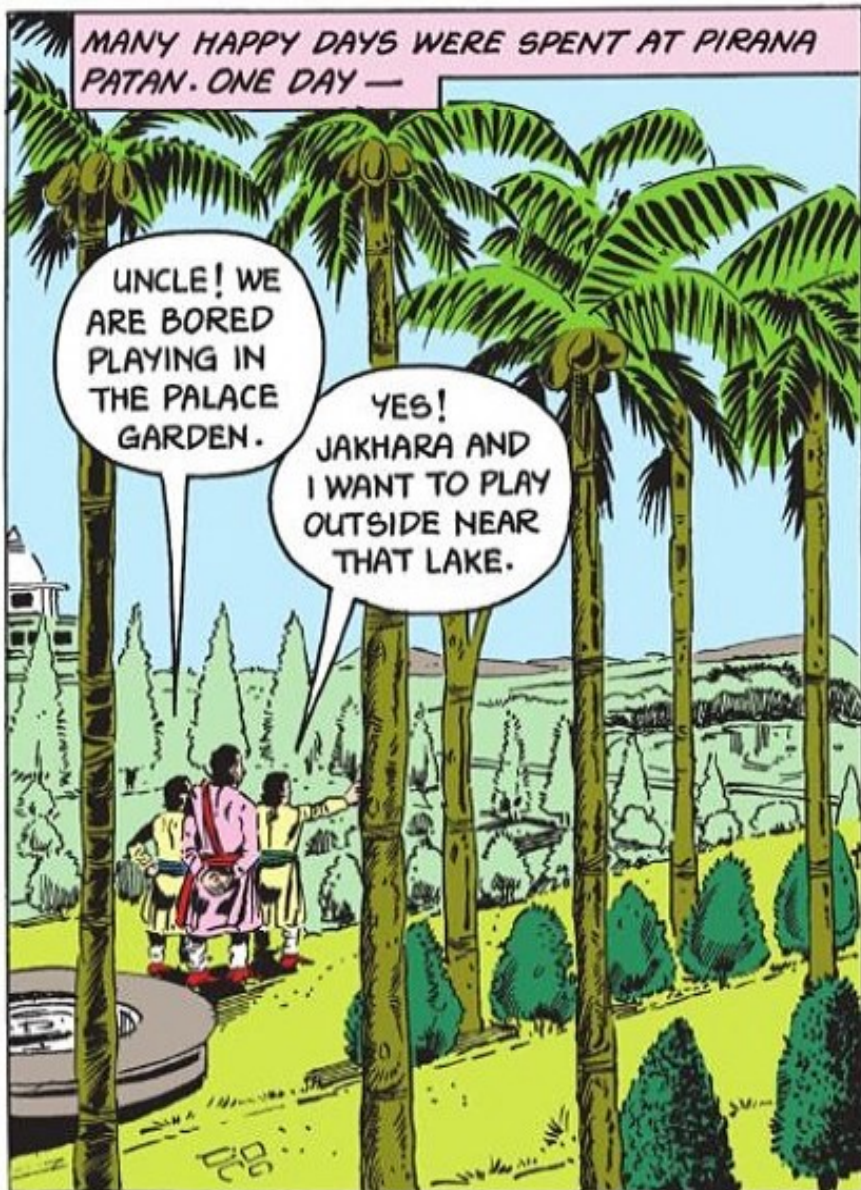
ODHA! I HAD GIVEN UP HOPE OF EVER SEEING YOU. YOU ARE WELCOME — AND YOUR FAMILY TOO.

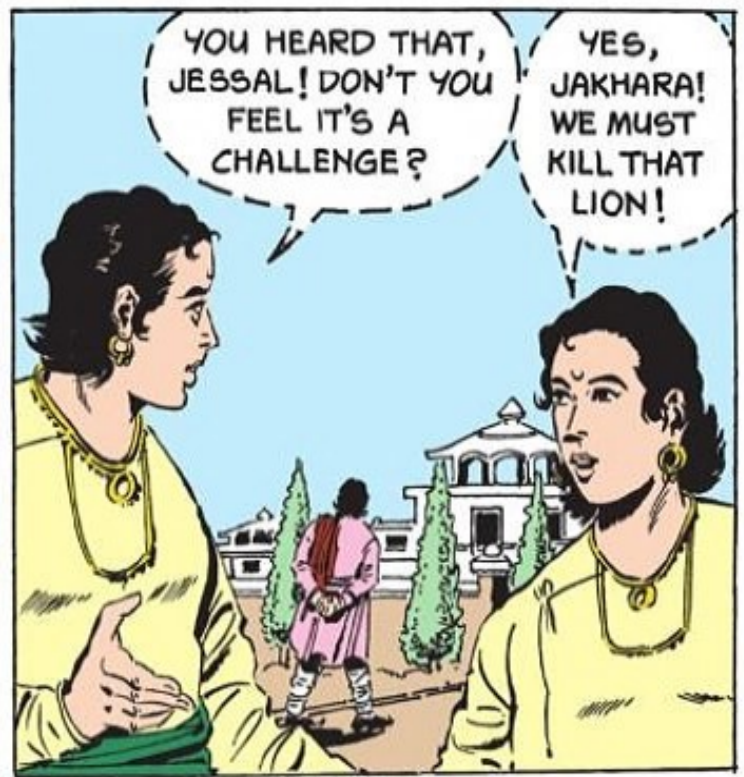


MANY HAPPY DAYS WERE SPENT AT PIRANA PATAN. ONE DAY —

UNCLE! WE ARE BORED PLAYING IN THE PALACE GARDEN.

YES! JAKHARA AND I WANT TO PLAY OUTSIDE NEAR THAT LAKE.





THE TWO BROTHERS SNEAKED INTO THE JUNGLE EQUIPPED WITH BOWS AND ARROWS.



HEARING THEM APPROACH, THE LION ROARED AND WAS POISED TO JUMP WHEN —



THE NEWS SPREAD ROUND THE TOWN LIKE WILDFIRE. THIS INCIDENT CREATED A SENSATION IN THE PALACE TOO. AT THE ROYAL COURT —

BRAVE BOYS!

AFTER ALL, THEIR FATHER IS ODHA.

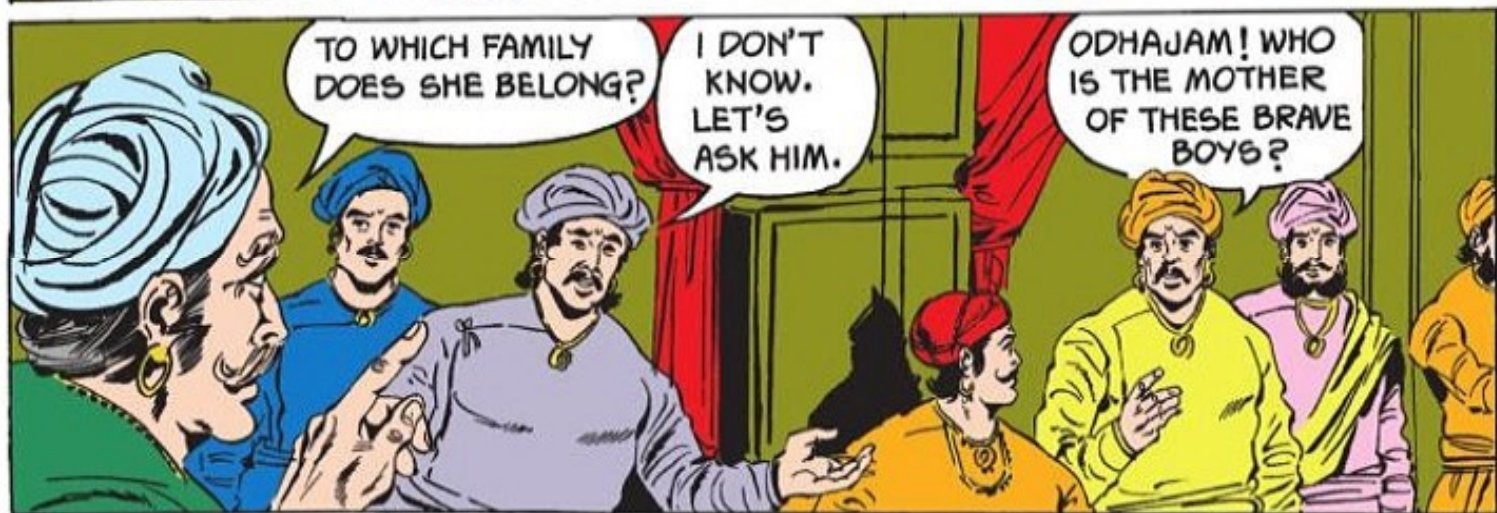
AND NO DOUBT THEIR MOTHER COMES FROM SOME BRAVE FAMILY TOO.



TO WHICH FAMILY DOES SHE BELONG?

I DON'T KNOW. LET'S ASK HIM.

ODHAJAM! WHO IS THE MOTHER OF THESE BRAVE BOYS?



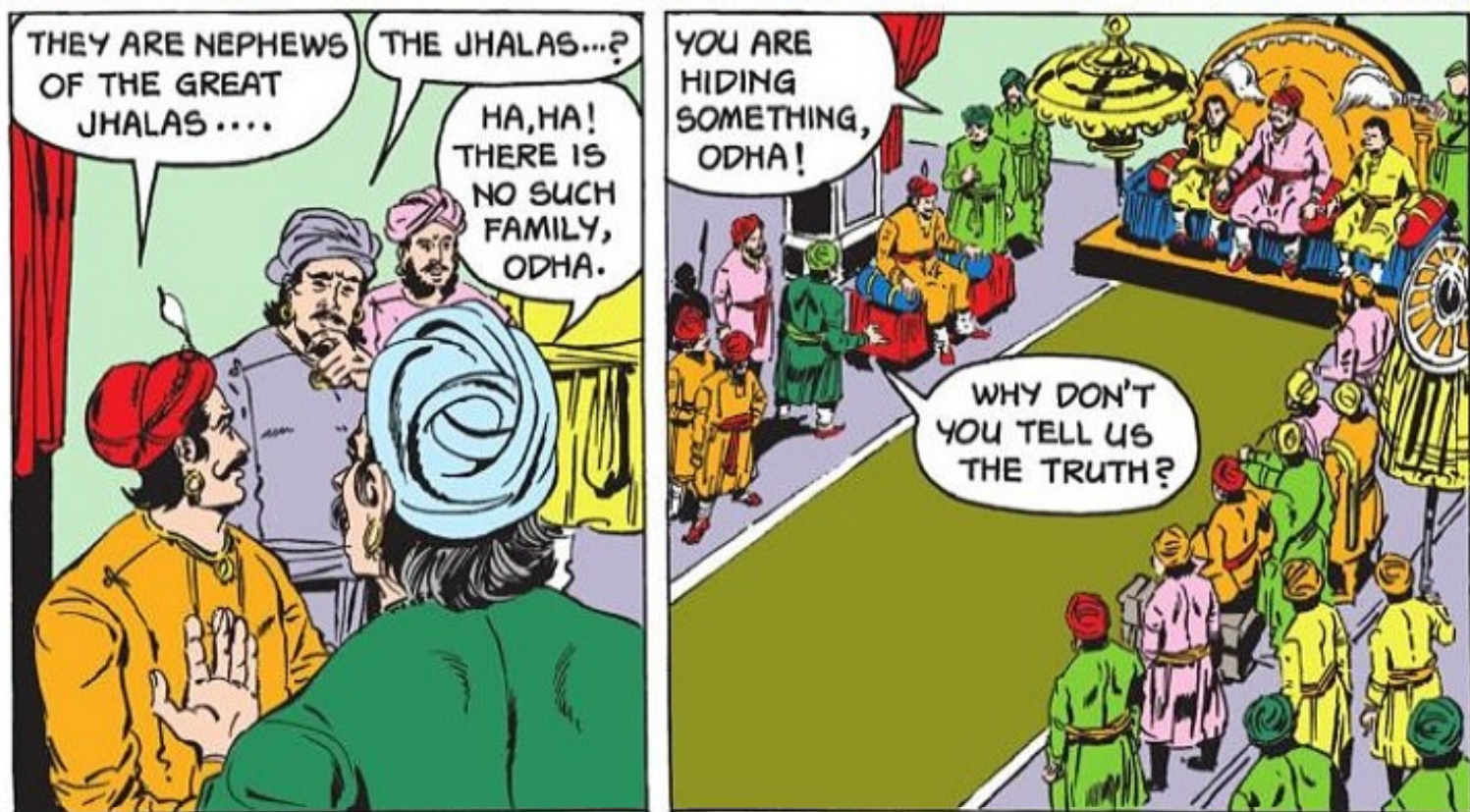
THEY ARE NEPHEWS OF THE GREAT JHALAS

THE JHALAS...?

HA, HA! THERE IS NO SUCH FAMILY, ODHA.

YOU ARE HIDING SOMETHING, ODHA!

WHY DON'T YOU TELL US THE TRUTH?



THE BOYS FELT HUMILIATED AND DREW THEIR SWORDS TO ATTACK THE COURTIER'S.

FATHER, OUR HONOUR IS AT STAKE. IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH OUR MOTHER'S FAMILY?

TELL THE TRUTH OR ALL OF US WILL HAVE TO DIE!



HOW CAN I TELL THE TRUTH AND LOSE HOTHAL? BUT IF I DON'T, MY SONS' LINEAGE WILL BE UNDER A CLOUD.



SONS! DON'T INSIST UPON KNOWING THE TRUTH OR YOU WILL REPENT!



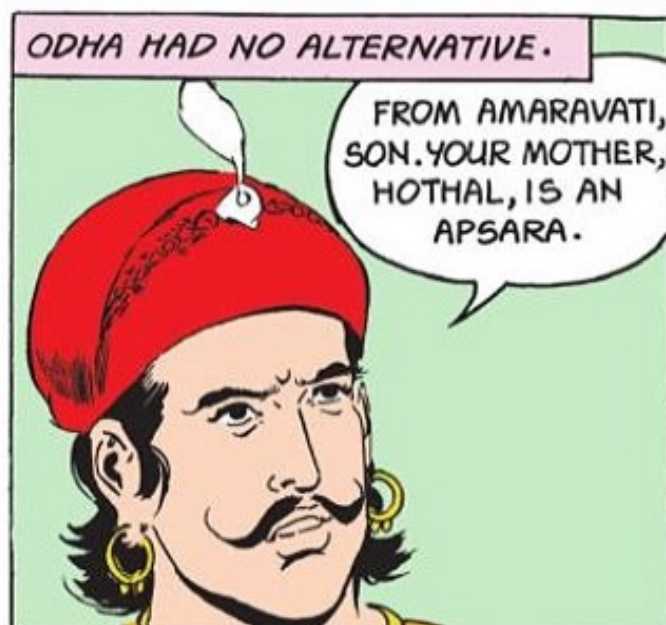
IT DOESN'T MATTER! A BAD NAME IS WORSE THAN DEATH.

SPEAK, FATHER, WHERE DOES OUR MOTHER COME FROM?



ODHA HAD NO ALTERNATIVE.

FROM AMARAVATI, SON. YOUR MOTHER, HOTHAL, IS AN APSARA.



AN APSARA! HOTHAL IS AN APSARA!

AH, THAT'S WHY YOUR SONS ARE SO BRAVE.



THEIR PRAISE FELL ON ODHA'S EARS
LIKE THUNDERING DRUM BEATS.

HOW
FORTUNATE
YOU ARE,
ODHA!



HIS WORST FEARS CAME TRUE. WHEN HE
RUSHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENT —

FORGIVE
ME,
HOTHAL.

OH, ODHA,
YOU HAVE
JUST SOUNDED
MY DOOM!



GOODBYE,
MY BELOVED
ODHA!



SO HOTHAL HAD TO RETURN TO
AMARAVATI. BUT ODHA COULD
NEVER FORGET HER, NOR
COULD THE PEOPLE OF KUTCH
WHO, TO THIS DAY, SING
ABOUT THE LOVE OF HOTHAL
AND ODHA.

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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Bheema And Hanuman
Bheeshma
Chandrahasta
Dasharatha
Dhruva And Ashtavakra
Draupadi
Drona
Elephanta
Gandhari
Ganesha
Ganesha And The Moon
Ganga
Garuda
Ghatotkacha
Hanuman
Hanuman To The Rescue
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Heroes Of Hampi
Indra And Shachi
Indra And Shibi
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Karna
Karttikeya
Konark
Krishna
Krishna And Jarasandha
Krishna And Narakasura
Krishna And Rukmini
Krishna And Shishupala
Krishna And The False
Vaasudeva
Kubera
Kumbhakarna
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Deshbandhu
Chittaranjan Das
Eknath
Fa Hien
Ghanshyamdas Birla
Guru Arjan
Guru Gobind Singh
Guru Har Gobind
Guru Nanak
Guru Tegh Bahadur
Huen Tsang
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Jim Corbett
Jnaneshwar
Kabir
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Lal Bahadur Shastri
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Bimbisara
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Chandra Shekhar Azad
Chandragupta Maurya
Chennamma Of Keladi
Dara Shukho And
Aurangzeb
Durgadas
Ellora Caves
Hakka And Bukka
Hari Singh Nalwa
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Hemu
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Noor Jahan
Padmini
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Raja Bhoja
Raja Raja Chola
Rana Kumbha
Rana Pratap
Rana Sanga
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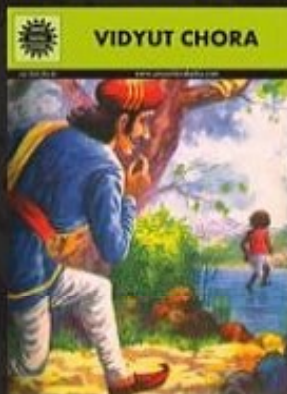
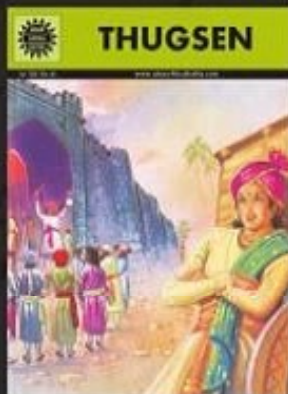
HOTHAL

In Indian mythology, apsaras are beautiful dancers who live in heaven. Hothal is different. Though an apsara, she longs to live on earth like a mortal.

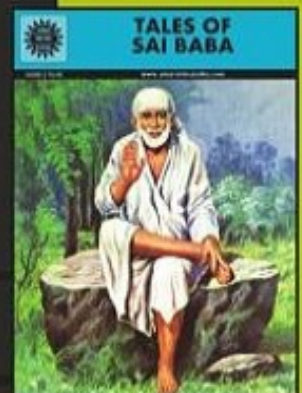
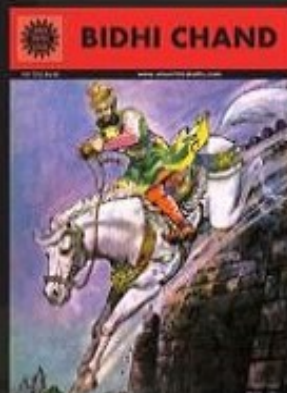
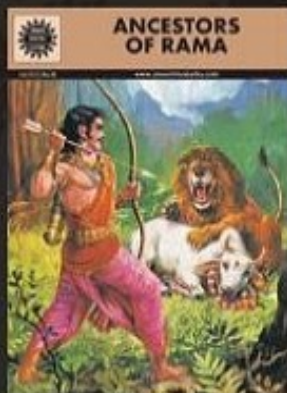
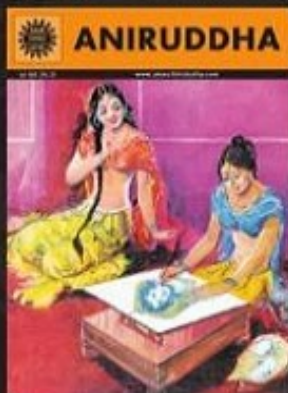
Hothal gets her wish when Indra sends her to live on earth. She finds that life as a human is harder and even more sorrowful than she can imagine. Her father is evicted from his kingdom, and they live as exiles. Even when her beloved father dies, Hothal remains brave and strong. She decides to disguise herself as a man and avenge the injustice done to her father. While in disguise, she allies herself with the valiant Odha and soon falls deeply in love with him.

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